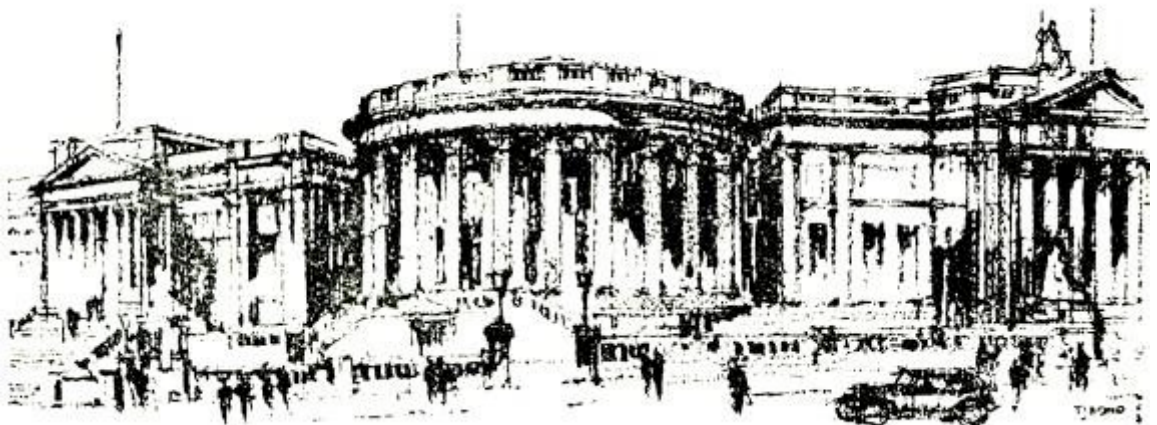


# Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years

National Museums Liverpool

April 2010



# Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years

The 150 years that led from a little museum on a side street in Liverpool to the present World Museum have no little drama in them, and contain some remarkable characters who lived and worked in remarkable times.

Liverpool's museum is the oldest of the museums and galleries operated by National Museums Liverpool, and is one of the great museums of the British regions. Its story reflects Liverpool's rise to become one of the world's great trading cities and an awesome dip in its fortunes during the twentieth century. The museum was born in halcyon days of confidence when the British Empire straddled the globe and Liverpool was a centre of worldwide trade. It suffered massive destruction in the Second World War. After the war, years of increasing desperation were followed by uncertain and painful recovery and nationalisation.

Along the way the museum spawned great institutions in Liverpool, the Walker Art Gallery, the Merseyside Maritime Museum and the Museum of Liverpool. It emerged in the twenty-first century with a new name, World Museum, that signalled a return to its earliest and most enduring ambitions - taking visitors' attention away from their immediate surroundings to look outwards at life sciences, earth sciences and human cultures around the world.

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The museum's name changed numerous times, and so in this story it is usually just called 'the museum' or 'Liverpool's museum'.

Many thanks are due to the people who helped with this text. They helped to get it right. Where it's wrong, that'll be my bit.

John Millard  
3 April 2010

## Contents

|                      | Page                                     |
|----------------------|--|
| Introduction         | 2  |
| Contents             | 3  |
| Chapter 1 1850-1853  | <b>The Derby Museum</b> 4                |
| Chapter 2 1853-1860  | <b>William Brown</b> 14                  |
| Chapter 3 1860-1890  | <b>The new museum</b> 23                 |
| Chapter 4 1890-1898  | <b>Electric catfish</b> 33               |
| Chapter 5 1896-1918  | <b>Horseshoe galleries</b> 38            |
| Chapter 6 1919-1940  | <b>Experiments</b> 46                    |
| Chapter 7 1941-1949  | <b>Bombed-out</b> 58                     |
| Chapter 8 1950-1955  | <b>Closed</b> 66                         |
| Chapter 9 1955-1971  | <b>Rebuilding</b> 73                     |
| Chapter 10 1972-1993 | <b>Expanding</b> 82                      |
| Chapter 11 1990-1997 | <b>More experiments and expansion</b> 92 |
| Chapter 12 1997-2001 | <b>Highs and lows</b> 104                |
| Chapter 13 2001-2008 | <b>Capital of Culture</b> 113            |
| Illustrations        | 123                                      |

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## Chapter 1 – 1850-1853 – The Derby Museum

Thomas John Moore was a modest and unassuming man. He was conscientious, unpretentious, retiring, and 'of a highly nervous disposition'<sup>1</sup>. He came to Liverpool at a time when it was full of daring entrepreneurs. Members of its powerful elite brought him to the town and selected him to set up and run its first public museum. He saw the town grow at a frantic speed and claim to be the second city of the British Empire. But somehow he managed to claim that his life was 'specially quiet, simple and uneventful'<sup>2</sup>.

Moore was born in London in 1824 and inherited his father's interest in natural history. His father introduced him to the Zoological Society of London and the teenage Thomas Moore was employed in their zoo on his father's recommendation. Opening in 1828, it was the first public zoo in the world, and it carries on today as London Zoo in Regent's Park. There Moore came to the attention of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby. The Earl of Derby was an enthusiastic natural historian, and was president of the Zoological Society. When he inherited his title on his father's death in October 1834, he set out on grand plans to create a menagerie and zoological collection at Knowsley Hall, the family seat some eight miles to the east of Liverpool.

In 1843, when Moore was still a teenager, Lord Derby invited him to work in the menagerie he was creating on his estate at Knowsley. The Earl's collection of live animals rivalled any in the world, and he built up fine collections of natural history books, drawings and preserved specimens. The books, drawings and museum specimens were kept in Knowsley Hall, while a hundred acres of the park at Knowsley were dedicated to exotic birds, mammals, reptiles and fish. In order that some of them could roam free the Earl had a ten mile wall built around the park.

Private zoos were fashionable among aristocrats and showmen at the time. Before the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl embarked on his works at Knowsley, his father had an aviary there and kept ornamental pheasants and songbirds. Another private zoo, the brainchild of Thomas Atkins, was nearby, in a park on the road to Liverpool in what is now an area of housing off the West Derby Road. However Atkins's

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<sup>1</sup> 1892, 'The Late Thomas Moore, In Memoriam', *The Liverpool Review*, 5 November, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Moore, T.J., 1890. 'Lord Derby's Museum (Reminiscences by Mr. T.J. Moore)'. *The Liverpool Review*, 8 March, p. 10-11.

Liverpool Zoological Gardens was not for private contemplation and research. His zoo was open to the public for profit. A guidebook of the time listed some of its attractions:-

... two beautiful macaws ... a Peruvian Llama ... a playful West Indian goat ... three fine pelicans ... two American black bears ... two beautiful zebras ... an American tapir ... the gnu, a lively but vicious animal ... two bears ... four fine eagles ... a large condor ... a couple of porcupines ... a choice collection of the feathered tribe ... [and] three elephants<sup>3</sup>.

On Mondays and Fridays during the summer the zoo boasted entertainment from Mr Stubbs's Band.

Thomas Atkins was a showman with a claim to have been the first in England to breed 'ligers', a cross between lions and tigers. The Earl of Derby eschewed larger mammals, especially the big cats, but he exchanged other animals with Atkins. The Earl also bought some animals from dealers, and he employed people to collect specimens, living or dead. He sent an expedition for three years to South Africa. For several years he sent a collector to the Niger and Senegal, and financed two expeditions to Honduras. He was in contact with collectors all over the world to build up his extraordinary collection.

In the 1840s the Earl decided that the collection of preserved specimens should be kept together and that it should not go to the Zoological Society of London or to the British Museum. It should stay in Liverpool and become a provincial resource to complement those which were established in the capital. He decided that he would leave it to Liverpool's council, with the proviso that they would find somewhere for it to be housed, and would pay for its upkeep.

When the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby died at the end of June 1851, his son, the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl, set about clearing his late father's collection of dead birds and animals from the family home and the live exotic animals from the park. The live animals went first. In accordance with his father's will, Queen Victoria and the Zoological Society of London were given first pick of them. The Queen chose five Himalayan pheasants and the Society chose a herd of five Cape Elands (antelopes).

Thomas Moore produced a list of the 1,617 remaining animals and birds in the park, and his list became the catalogue of an auction sale held a little over three

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<sup>3</sup> 1835. *The picture of Liverpool, or, stranger's guide*. pp. 215, 217, 218 & 219.

months after the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl's death. Zoos in Amsterdam and Paris bought many of the animals and 160 went to the Zoological Society's zoo in London. Most of the other animals were bought by dealers.

After the Earl of Derby had cleared of his father's menagerie from the grounds of Knowsley Hall, his father's collection of some 20,000 natural history specimens still remained in the hall. About 19,000 were birds, some 11,000 of which were prepared for display, and 8,000 of which were study skins. Of the 1,000 quadrupeds, the smaller animals were ready to show while the larger animals mainly remained as skins.

The new Earl had also to decide what to do with Thomas Moore and the rest of his father's staff of curators and zoo keepers. He was energetically involved in national politics and, in a fast-moving political scene, he could not afford to spend too much time away from London. He had entered Parliament as a Whig but had grown more and more conservative and it was as a Conservative that he was serving in opposition to the Whig government when his father died. Less than eight months after his father's death, the Whig Prime Minister resigned and Lord Derby formed a government himself, the first of his three spells as Prime Minister. The settlement of his father's estate came in the middle of this busy time, and he was anxious to transfer the collections, and, if possible, Thomas Moore, to the council as fast as decently possible.

In Liverpool a small band of town councillors led by James Allanson Picton, worked hard to oblige the Earl. The energetic Picton was an architect, historian, and member of Liverpool town council for the Lime Street Ward. At council meetings Picton spoke on every subject and frequently. He was renowned for arriving late and speaking soon after, and he often left early and spoke immediately before his departure. He was a passionate campaigner for a library and museum.

In April 1850 Picton had proposed to the town council that a committee was set up to prepare for a new library and museum - the Association for the Promotion of a Free Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. The activity of this committee fell into shadow when the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby wrote to the council a fortnight after his father's death. The letter was read out at a special town council meeting on 16 July 1851. It announced the old Earl's wish to give the town his collection.

A deputation from the council, led by Picton, was sent to meet with the Earl. They returned with the terms for the bequest, including the appointment of trustees for the museum that he would approve.

The town council set up a Library and Museum Committee with Picton as the chairman. The committee suggested amalgamating the new museum with an existing Royal Institution Museum and Art Gallery on Colquitt Street near the middle of the town. The Liverpool Royal Institution had been set up in 1814, and had opened its museum in 1817<sup>4</sup>. It had a reading room and lecture hall for up to 500 people on the ground floor, and museum displays of natural history and sculpture on the floors above. The society received a Royal Charter in 1822 and opened its art gallery on the other side of Colquitt Street in 1843.

Because the Royal Institution had a Royal Charter, an Act of Parliament was required to transfer its collections to the council. Accordingly the *Liverpool Royal Institution (Transfer of Property) Bill* was submitted to Parliament in 1851, and Picton's Library and Museum Committee worked out the cost of taking over the Royal Institution Museum and receiving the Earl of Derby's collection.

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| One Curator                             | £130.0.0             |
| Five Assistants, messengers or porters  | 120.0.0              |
| Coals and gas                           | 40.0.0               |
| Insurance                               | 70.0.0               |
| Printing and Stationery                 | 15.0.0               |
| Cleaning                                | 20.0.0               |
| Repairs, painting &c.                   | 100.0.0              |
| Petty expenses                          | 20.0.0               |
| Allow for expanding or Renewing         |                      |
| Replacing, or improving the collections | 200.0.0 <sup>5</sup> |

A building for a new library was offered to the council for £2,500. The Union News Room, on the corner of Duke Street and Slater Street, was a few streets away from the Royal Institution museum. The Mersey Yacht Club was tenant of

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<sup>4</sup> Liverpool was not unusual in having a museum set up by a learned society well before the council got involved. For a few years early in the nineteenth century Liverpool also had a private museum of natural history, set up by the showman William Bullock. He opened up on Lord Street first and then on Church Street. Then he moved to London for a brief and spectacular spell on Piccadilly.

<sup>5</sup> Manuscript minutes of a meeting of the Library and Museum Committee on 2 September 1851 (photocopy in National Museums Liverpool file 'History of LM Bequest' 2009).

the upper room but its members were persuaded to give up their lease, and the council took over the building on 1 November 1851.

With the library question now settled, the Association for the Promotion of a Free Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery dissolved itself handing over the £1,389 2s 10d it had raised and the 4,000 books it had collected to the town council for the new museum and library. But the matter of a museum was not settled.

The Union News Room building, with alterations, finally cost the council about £3,600, and by October 1851 the Library and Museum Committee had found a librarian - John Stuart Dalton – who quickly filled the building with books leaving no room for the museum.

Tripartite negotiations over the museum continued between the Earl of Derby, the Liverpool Royal Institution and the town council, and inevitably ran into difficulties. The Royal Institution and the Earl of Derby had different ideas about who should be on a board of trustees for the museum. It began to look as if the new museum would have one set of trustees for the Derby collection and another set of trustees for the Liverpool Royal Institution's collection, and both would be entirely separate from the council's Library and Museum Committee. The Town Clerk had become embroiled in a lengthy exchange of letters with the secretary of the committee of the Royal Institution.

The Royal Institution called in its solicitors Messrs. Eden and Stanistreet. The Town Clerk went to meet the solicitors to discuss the bill that had gone to parliament to allow the institution to hand over its collections to the council. They made more and more specific requirements of the council, stipulating the standards to which the collections and the building should be kept, a guaranteed minimum expenditure, how often their trustees should meet, free entrance, and the opening times of the museum and library. As the month of December wore on the negotiations between the town council and the Liverpool Royal Institution collapsed. The bill to transfer their collections to the town council was withdrawn from Parliament.

There was another meeting with Lord Derby in December but it was not long before the Earl lost patience. He was anxious that the council appoint a museum curator and move the collection from Knowsley Hall, so that he could return to London where, within two months, he would become Prime Minister in charge of a new Government. He wrote to the Mayor on Christmas day, and his letter was



read out at a meeting of the council's Library and Museum Committee on 30 December.

As my time in this part of the country is growing short, I am desirous of knowing whether the subject of the Derby Museum has yet been brought before the council at large, and whether I may consider the loans agreed to when I had the pleasure of seeing you here, as definitely accepted. I mean more particularly with regard to the appointment of a Curator by the Council from the names to be recommended by the Trustees. If that were so I would take an early opportunity of calling the Trustees together and agreeing upon our recommendation, and also on the appointment of additional Trustees. As the whole of the live collection is now disposed of and those engaged in it seeking further situations, and as very extensive changes in my establishment here are to take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of next month, I am desirous that no unnecessary delay should take place in the appointment of a Curator, that the several candidates for the Office may know what they have to look to. It would also be convenient, if it be possible, that the Museum should be removed to Liverpool before my departure for the South which will not be later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of next month. You will therefore I am sure excuse my urging an early and final decision on the part of the Council and with the compliments of the season...<sup>6</sup>

The Mayor assured the Earl that any problems in appointing a curator were of little importance and the collection could be moved whenever he wished. The Earl made it known that his favoured candidate to become curator was Thomas Moore, who would shortly be one of those 'seeking further situations'. His powerful recommendation was supported by a batch of testimonials from the British Museum and the Zoological Society. The council responded eventually to the Earl's desires, and sometime early in 1852 both Thomas Moore and the natural history collections of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby were transferred to the care of the town council of Liverpool. Moore became first curator of the new museum, and, like the town's new librarian, was paid £150 a year. The 13<sup>th</sup> Earl's magnificent natural history collections moved from Knowsley Hall to a hastily constructed brick building behind the new library, on the corner of Slater Street and Parr Street.

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<sup>6</sup> Manuscript minutes of a meeting of the Library and Museum Committee on 30 December 1851 - includes a transcription of Lord Derby's letter of 25 December 1951 (photocopy in National Museums Liverpool file 'History of LM Bequest' 2008).

Meanwhile, on 1 May 1852, just as Lord Derby's collection was being sorted prior to opening the council's museum, another museum opened in the town. The Liverpool jeweller and prolific collector Joseph Mayer opened his Egyptian Museum. Like the Royal Institution Museum, it was in Colquitt Street and, like the Royal Institution, Mayer made a charge for entry.

On 3 May 1852 Parliament passed *An Act for establishing a Public Library and Gallery of Arts at Liverpool, and to make Provision for the Reception of a Collection of Specimens illustrative of Natural History presented by the Earl of Derby for the Benefit of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Liverpool and the Neighbourhood thereof, and others resorting thereto*. The Act gave the town council power to levy a rate of a penny in the pound on all property within the borough for the maintenance of the library, museum and its Botanic Gardens.

The library was opened on the 18 October 1852, with an entrance at the front of the building, on Duke Street.

The museum was opened on the 8 March, 1853, by the Mayor of Liverpool, Councillor Samuel Holme. It had an entrance round the side of the building, on Slater Street, where today there is a bricked-up door that was once the original museum entrance.

The opening of the museum was timed to coincide with the celebration of the centenary of the birth of the late William Roscoe. A successful Liverpool lawyer and radical politician, Roscoe's interests included history, poetry, languages, art and botany. He established Liverpool's Botanic Gardens, and campaigned passionately for the abolition of slavery at a time when the cause was very unpopular among shipowners and traders in Liverpool. His centenary celebrations in 1853 almost eclipsed the opening of the museum.

The day's celebrations began with a 'breakfast' in the Philharmonic Hall, in Hope Street, Liverpool. Joseph Mayer opened his Egyptian Museum for free to holders of tickets to the Philharmonic Hall event. In the afternoon there was a lecture in the theatre of the Royal Institution Museum, and in the evening a soirée at the Town Hall.

The museum opening was held between the Roscoe breakfast and the Roscoe lecture. The Mayor and the members of the council processed through the streets from the Town Hall to the museum, arriving at just after 2 o'clock. The Mayor then spoke from a temporary dais in the library, announcing first that he

had notes from both Lord Derby and from his son Lord Stanley saying that parliamentary business preventing them from attending. Perhaps it was just as well because large numbers of people could not be squeezed into the library for the ceremony. Picton complained in his speech that fitting Lord Derby's collection into the museum 'would surpass the accomplishment of any conjurer'<sup>7</sup>. When the other speeches were finished, the Bishop of Chester was called on to speak but announced that 'he little expected to be called upon to do more than be a spectator'. As soon as this farcical opening of the museum finished, a large party assembled in the more capacious lecture theatre of the Royal Institution Museum to continue the Roscoe celebrations.

The new council-run museum was named the Derby Museum of the Borough of Liverpool and attracted 157,861 visits in its first 32 weeks. The museum was open from dawn till dusk on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It was closed on Sundays, and also on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for cleaning, or for artists and students to visit. As the railway brought more trippers from neighbouring towns demand for Saturday opening increased to which the committee agreed, so that the museum was open four days a week. Entry was free and a commentator noted that it was good to see 'the artisan and his family' enjoying the museum<sup>8</sup>.

When it first opened the museum was described as consisting of 'stuffed birds and a large number of birds prepared for stuffing'<sup>9</sup>. Four rooms on the upper floor were fitted out with cases that came with Lord Derby's collection from Knowsley Hall, and two rooms on the ground floor with new cases. On the ground floor were birds in glass cases and quadrupeds, mainly smaller animals, including a remarkable group of sloths. Upstairs were birds. A Kiwi from New Zealand was among the first specimens brought to Europe. When it first arrived it was thought to be a fake and the skin had to be turned inside out in order to convince a group of naturalists that it was genuine.

But that was not all there was to see.

In the first room there were ten oil paintings by the artist, showman and ethnologist, George Catlin. Catlin came to Europe from the USA with a

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<sup>7</sup> *Liverpool Courier*, 9 March 1853, p.3.

<sup>8</sup> Shimmin, H., 1857. *Liverpool Life: Its Pleasures, Practices and Pastimes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury*). 'The Derby Museum', chapter X, pp.72-7, p.73.

<sup>9</sup> 1853. 'Opening of the Derby Museum.' *Liverpool Courier*. 9 March. p.75 (p.3).

reputation as a painter of the life and customs of the Native American tribes of the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains. In Europe his travelling shows had success and notoriety for more than a decade, but in 1852 he went bankrupt and the whole of his Native American collection fell into the hands of his creditors.

In the second room on the ground floor were portraits of the founder of the museum, the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl, and the current earl, the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby. Also on show were the items that Liverpool council had sent to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the Crystal Palace, London - samples of Liverpool's imports and a large model of the docks and the town measuring 15 metres by 21½ metres. On show nearby was a model of Liverpool in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Thomas Moore's reports to the Library and Museum Committee were sparse. They reported the number of visits to the museum and, occasionally, said that he continued 'Stuffing Specimens in Store'. In March 1857, in a rare display of boldness, he asked the committee to authorise him to order three aquarium tanks at the cost of £14 5s od. His request was agreed, and Moore embarked on what was the second public aquarium in the world. The first had been the Fish House at Regent's Park Zoo established in 1853, and the third, following Moore's aquarium in Liverpool, was the Aquarial Gardens in Boston, Massachusetts, of 1859 (now the New England Aquarium)<sup>10</sup>.

Moore put one aquarium tank near the turnstile at the entrance and used it to display shells, insects, freshwater fish and plants. He placed two smaller tanks in the next room and they also contained insects and fish together. Thomas Moore applied the expertise that he had gained as Deputy Curator of Lord Derby's menagerie to keeping live creatures, and developed his own ways of obtaining them. Liverpool was a very busy port, and ships' crews came to the town by the thousands. Moore had both salt and fresh water tanks in the early days of his new aquarium and sought to establish the museum as a willing recipient of their exotic imports. In this way his aquarium obtained supplies of aquatic creatures from different parts of the world. In the year Moore opened the aquarium, Samuel Archer, the ship's surgeon on the *SS Great Britain*, brought two living chitons (molluscs) and six living anemones from South Australia and Cape Verde, and presented them to the museum. Within a few months he was reporting that the installation of aquarium tanks had created an increase in visits to the Derby Museum to 123,059.

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<sup>10</sup> Soliski, Leszek, 2004-5. *Public Aquariums 1853 – 1914: Historical Perspective*. Wroclaw, - translated with an abstract in *Der Zoologische Garten*, 75 (5-6), 2006, pp.362-397 – lists early public aquariums in date order.

Even before it opened the Derby Museum started to receive donations. Though the founding collection was of natural history, model ships and the products of human cultures from around the world started to trickle in. In 1852, A. Graham gave four amulets taken from Malay pirates. Two years later the Earl of Derby presented Malaccan cockspurs and fishhooks, and in 1855 Mr William Guthrie presented material which he collected when working as an engineer on a steamer on the River Niger. Two years later the widow of Captain Savage gave her husband's collection of nearly 500 'weapons of savage races, many unique'<sup>11</sup>.

Moore had an office off the first floor galleries of the Derby Museum and visitors occasionally discovered him among the natural history displays. He would engage them in conversation about the birds on show, displaying the 'zeal of an enthusiastic naturalist'<sup>12</sup>. His personal inclination was towards natural history and he showed no sign that he wanted to broaden his interest. The slow trickle of artefacts into the museum did little to disturb him, but the trickle threatened to become a flood in 1856 when Joseph Mayer, the owner and proprietor of the Egyptian Museum, offered his collection to the town council. Mayer had evidently heard about the plans that the town council was beginning to hatch for a new larger museum. Even as the Derby Museum was opened, Picton and his fellow campaigners knew that it was too small.

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<sup>11</sup> West, A.C., 1981. *Notes on the History of the Ethnology Department*, typewritten text, Ethnology Department, Merseyside County Museum, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Shimmin, H., 1857. *Liverpool Life: Its Pleasures, Practices and Pastimes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series (reprinted from the *Liverpool Mercury*). 'The Derby Museum', chapter X, pp.72-7, p.75

## Chapter 2 – 1853-1860 – William Brown

Plans began for a larger museum almost as soon as the Derby Museum opened in its hastily-built home on Slater Street. At a council meeting on 21 September 1853, Liverpool's Mayor, Samuel Holme, announced that William Brown had come forward with an offer of £6,000 to build a library and museum if the council would provide the site for it.

William Brown was an Irish-American who had made a fortune in nearly forty years of business dealings in Liverpool. Born in Ballymena on 30 May 1784, he was the son of a Belfast linen merchant, Alexander Brown. At the age of twelve he was sent to boarding school in Catterick, Yorkshire, and, when he was sixteen, his father moved the family to Baltimore, U.S.A. Alexander Brown imported Irish linen, and sent cotton and tobacco back to Europe. He set up the first investment bank in the U.S.A. and, within a few years, became one of its first millionaires. He sent his son William, the eldest of four brothers, back to England to establish a foothold for the family business. William Brown chose Liverpool because of its shipping links to America, and founded the merchant bank William Brown & Co. there in 1810. His brothers expanded the Brown's bank in the U.S.A., setting up branches in Philadelphia in 1818, and New York in 1825. William Brown's Liverpool business financed shipping between Europe and the United States, and he took on a partner, Joseph Shipley, in 1824. The company's fortunes endured difficult times and great success. It became Brown Shipley & Co. in 1838, and by the mid 1840s was reckoned to operate a sixth of the trade between Great Britain and the United States<sup>13</sup>. William Brown served terms as a J.P. and was M.P. for South Lancashire between 1846 and 1859.

When Brown made his offer to finance a museum and library building, the council rapidly found a site for it in the north of the town on Shaw's Brow. It was a steep difficult road fringed by dilapidated houses and dingy shops, with 'low' public houses on every corner. Here the council chose to develop an ambitious group of civic buildings to reflect the growing power and confidence of the town. Near the top of Shaw's Brow was Lime Street Station where the railway arrived in Liverpool, and opposite the station, the council was building a concert hall, court

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<sup>13</sup> McCarthy, Michael, 2010. *The house that trust built: William Brown and the rise of Brown Shipley in 19<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool*. p.18. This book was commissioned by descendants of William Brown and sponsored by the banks Brown Brothers Harriman and Brown Shipley mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William Brown's arrival in Liverpool in 1810 and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his donation of the library and museum in 1860.)

house and assembly hall all in one – the magnificent St George's Hall. It took over a decade for St George's Hall to be built and it opened in September 1854.

The council widened Shaw's Brow, and cut back the rock at the top of the hill to reduce the gradient of the road. To acquire the buildings along Shaw's Brow required an Act of Parliament. The Liverpool Improvement Act of 16 July 1855 allowed the council to enforce the acquisition of the land and buildings required for the new library and museum. It took so long that on 22 October 1855, William Brown wrote to the council in frustration.

When in 1853, I promised Mr. Holme, the Mayor, £6,000 for building a Free Library, it was on the condition that the Corporation would find a site, and that I might have the pleasure of seeing it built and in operation during my life ... If the Corporation is resolved not to proceed in this affair, I shall consider that it now wishes to decline my offer, for I never considered an indefinite postponement of this measure<sup>14</sup>.

The council managed to appease William Brown, at least for the time being.

News of the negotiations over a new museum brought an offer from the Liverpool silversmith and prolific antiquities collector Joseph Mayer. He wrote to the council in April 1856, and his letter was read out at a council meeting:

I shall be happy to deposit my collection in the public museum when completed, if it be found that there is space enough to spare, that would contain them...<sup>15</sup>

The council referred the matter to Picton's Library and Museum Committee.

Joseph Mayer was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, in 1803. He moved to Liverpool when he was twenty and set up his own jewellery and silversmith business in his early forties. His interest in collecting began at an early age and he used his business trips to study and to buy a huge range of material. His chief interests were in Central America, medieval European manuscripts, ivories and enamels, and ancient Egypt. His Egyptian Museum in

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<sup>14</sup> Hume, Rev. Abraham, ed., 1858. *Documents and proceedings connected with the donation of a free public library and museum, by William Brown Esq., M.P., to the town of Liverpool*, p.5, letter of 22 October 1855 from William Brown, Richmond Hill, Liverpool.

<sup>15</sup> *Library and Museum Committee Minutes, November 1855-September 1858*, pp. 63 and 68.

Colquitt Street, Liverpool, showed only a part of his collection. It was clear that the quality, range and number of artefacts that he collected would make an impressive addition to Liverpool's planned museum, balancing the natural history collection of Lord Derby.

Mayer attended a meeting of Picton's Library and Museum Committee on 4 April 1856. He said that he would lend his collection to the new museum, with the intention of presenting it eventually to the town. The committee arranged to visit him on the following Tuesday to view the collection. There is no record of what happened during that visit but there must have been a falling out as the matter was dropped. Without Mayer's collection, the new museum continued to be planned as an overwhelmingly natural history museum.

The council launched a competition in February 1856 inviting architects to design the new museum and library, and offering 150 guineas and 100 guineas for the two best designs. 115 'sketches' were sent in, and were exhibited for a week at St George's Hall in September. The entries were displayed anonymously with each competitor using an alias. Each of them was asked to nominate the three best designs, apart from his own. The final decision on the winners of the cash prizes was made by the Library and Museum Committee with advice from the Corporation Surveyor, John Weightman. The winner was the design bearing the alias *Con Amore*, and the 100 guineas second prize went to a design marked *Alma*. *Con Amore* turned out to be the watercolourist and architect Thomas Allom. His winning scheme proposed an ornate façade covered with expensive sculpture and was selected in spite of being considered too costly. Liverpool's borough surveyor John Weightman was charged with adapting the design. He produced a similar, if simpler design with a suitably massive six-column Corinthian portico.

On 5 April 1857, William Brown laid the foundation stone of the new museum and library amid an enormous civic fuss. The day began with the obligatory Victorian 'breakfast' party. William Brown sat at the right hand of the Deputy Mayor, Samuel Holmes, and James Allanson Picton introduced a series of deputations from the town's societies and institutions.

As William Brown emerged from the Town Hall the band struck up *See the Conquering Hero Come*, and the assembled dignitaries marched three abreast through the main streets of Liverpool led by the Fire Brigade and the band of the Bluecoat Hospital, where William Brown was a board member. Thousands of



spectators lined the route, flags were out on buildings, and the bells of the parish church rang out.

At 12 noon they arrived at the site of the museum, and a cavity in the foundation stone was loaded with coins and newspapers of the day, and a medal commemorating of the Treaty of Paris, which had marked the end of the Crimean War in 1856. The stone was duly laid and there were speeches, and then a banquet in St. George's Hall, the first to be held in the relatively new building. The band of the Royal Lancashire Artillery entertained the guests.

William Brown was 72 years old and appeared uncomfortable throughout the day according to the American author Nathaniel Hawthorne. He was finishing a term of office as United States consul in Liverpool, and attended all the festivities. He wrote in his *English Notebooks*:-

Mr. Browne (sic) himself, the hero of the day, was the plainest and simplest man of all - an exceedingly unpretending gentleman in black; small, white-haired, pale, quiet, and respectable. I rather wondered why he chose to be the centre of all this ceremony; for he did not seem either particularly to enjoy it, or to be at all incommoded by it, as a more nervous and susceptible man might have been<sup>16</sup>

Using powers given to it by the Liverpool Improvement Act of 1855, the council was gradually acquiring and clearing the area on Shaw's Brow for the new museum. From a Mr. Bradshaw they bought for £3,500 'a freehold property at the corner of Shaw's Brow and Byrom Street containing about 2,188 square yards of Land with houses, shops and Warehouse thereon'<sup>17</sup>.

The sloping site necessitated extensive foundations and a huge terrace from the higher part of the street to the entrance of the new museum and library building. (The terrace survived until the early 1900s when it was replaced by the massive set of steps that now lead to the building's classical portico.) The council had to cover escalating costs of the site and demolitions, and, as costs of the building itself increased, William Brown guaranteed to pay for the work. By October 1859 the old houses around the site had nearly all been cleared away and the roof was

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<sup>16</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1857. *English Notebooks*, 15 April, [www.eldritchpress.org/nh/pfenbo1.html#d1857](http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/pfenbo1.html#d1857), accessed 20.09.09, and quoted in Kouwenhaven, J.A., 1968. *Partners in Banking*: p.105.

<sup>17</sup> 1857. Minute of Council meeting 14 October. *Council Minute Book December 1856-March 1859*, p 266.

on the new library and museum. The building emerged as a new landmark and was forming a group with Lime Street Station and St George's Hall. Together they expressed Liverpool's civic pride and power.

As Thomas Moore worked on plans for displays in the new museum he was joined by Reverend Henry Hugh Higgins, Liverpool town councillor and shortly to be a member of the Library and Museum Committee. Higgins was born in Turvey Abbey, Bedfordshire, and arrived in Liverpool in 1843 as an inspector of Church of England schools. He held a number of curacies, was chaplain to the Rainhill Asylum, and served twice as president of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. He was also a natural history enthusiast and volunteer at the Derby Museum.

Both Moore and Higgins were natural historians and their proposed displays focused on the natural history collections of the Earl of Derby, Moore working on the vertebrate collections and Higgins on invertebrate collections. As they planned the displays, their world was rocked by discussions on ideas of evolution and natural selection. On 22 November 1859 Darwin's *Origin of Species* went on sale to the public. 1,250 copies were printed, most of which sold the first day. Reverend Henry Higgins, as president of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool, gave an address to the society *On Darwin's Theory of the Origin of Species*. In spite of his muscular religious convictions, Higgins thought Darwin's ideas were 'confirmed'. His ebullient and optimistic Christian belief saw the divine in the natural world and in Darwin's theories.

The laws which Mr Darwin has discovered are found, sure enough, hidden below the glorious movements on the face of nature.<sup>18</sup>

Liverpool's Library and Museum Committee circulated a pamphlet, *Liverpool Free Public Library and Derby Museum: reports on fitting up the new building*, with three reports with plans for the contents of the new building. One report was written by Thomas Moore the curator of the museum. One was written by John Stuart Dalton, the librarian. The third was written by the Reverend Henry Higgins.

The proposals had art in the new entrance hall and in the gallery running round the hall on the first floor. The library had six rooms to the right of the entrance hall, and the museum had six rooms to the left of the entrance hall as well as nearly the whole of the first floor. Ten or eleven of the museum rooms were to

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<sup>18</sup> Higgins, Rev. Henry H., 1883. 'The Natural Theology of Music', *Sermons Broad and Short*. Simkins, Marshall & Co., London.

show Lord Derby's collection of natural history. One room was allocated for ethnology, and two for the two models of Liverpool and examples of Liverpool imports from the old museum on Slater Street.

The pamphlet on the arrangements for the new museum and library was released to a select band of men who were invited to discuss the proposals at a meeting on a Saturday evening in December 1859. One of those who received the pamphlet was the Reverend Abraham Hume, vicar of Vauxhall, honorary canon of Liverpool and long-time supporter of the museum. He rushed out a pamphlet of his own complaining of the strong natural-history bias in Moore's and Higgins's proposals for the museum. He declared that the discussion of the layout of the museum was biased. There were, he said, 'two highly respected advocates on behalf of one subject and not a voice raised on behalf of any other'<sup>19</sup>.

The Library and Museum Committee quieted Reverend Hume's complaint with a claim that the new building would cover some 6,000 square yards on each floor, and there would be 'ample room for the full development of every branch of the establishment'<sup>20</sup>. In fact their figure for the footprint of the new building was a wild overestimate. It actually covered less than 4,000 square yards.

While Moore and Higgins laboured, the new museum and library was finished and William Brown formally handed the building over amid a great civic brouhaha. Brown was naturally at the centre of the celebrations. When he had first approached the town council seven years before, he had offered £6,000 towards the costs of building a new library and museum, but when the building opened it was reported that he spent £40,000.

The festivities began on the evening of Wednesday 17 October when the Mayor and the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Brougham, addressed a meeting at the Amphitheatre, Great Charlotte Street, Liverpool, heralding the opening of the new Free Public Library and Museum. A 'working man', Daniel Guile, addressed the meeting and gave a warning about the responsibilities the new library and museum brought with it.

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<sup>19</sup> Hume, Rev. Abraham, 1859. *Character of Liverpool Town Museum with suggestions for its interior arrangement*. (Reprinted from *Daily Post*). p.3

<sup>20</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Library and Derby Museum, 1858. *Sixth Annual Report*, October, p.6.

But, my working friends, before we can attain the utmost of good derivable from this institution we have a great deal to learn. Self-denial must be exercised. The power of the mind must gain complete victory over sensual appetites. Our leisure hours, instead of being spent in the taproom, the singing room and the dancing room, must be given to study, to thought, to perseverance and to industry; and with these aids, and the aid of knowledge, which is now placed within our reach, what shall hinder us from becoming the envy of surrounding nations and the pride of the world?<sup>21</sup>

Thursday 18 October 1860, the eighth anniversary of the opening of the library in the old building on Duke Street, was declared a public holiday on which William Brown was to present the new Free Public Library and Museum to the Mayor of Liverpool. All shops, banks and markets were closed. Flags were out on buildings and on shipping in the docks. A procession marched round the town from the Town Hall to the new library and museum, and the ceremony of handing over the building took place on a platform in front of the new building.

A granite plaque commemorating the event was placed above the building's entrance.

“This building, containing the Free Public Library, Museum and Gallery of Arts, including the Museum of Natural History presented by the Earl of Derby, was erected, on a site provided by the Corporation, at the sole cost of William Brown of Liverpool, Merchant, and by him presented to his fellow townsmen, October 18, 1860”.

In the evening the Mayor gave a banquet in nearby St. George's Hall for about 850 people. William Brown acknowledged a toast to his health and followed up on Derek Guile's speech of the previous night, musing on the possible effect of museum and library on the working man.

The time has happily gone when it was considered dangerous to instruct the people. Nothing is more satisfactory than to see how knowledge enables the labouring classes to understand and appreciate the advantages that they and their country derive from improved machinery...<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cowell, Peter, 1903. *Liverpool public libraries: a history of fifty years*. pp.71-2.

<sup>22</sup> 1860. *London Illustrated News*, Saturday 27 October, pp.405-6

A full-length marble statue of William Brown by Irish sculptor Patrick MacDowell was installed in a niche of the Great Hall of St George's Hall, and was unveiled by the Mayor during the evening. The council also commissioned a full length portrait of William Brown from Scottish portrait painter Sir John Watson Gordon, and a medal was struck with Brown's portrait on one side and a view of the new building on the other<sup>23</sup>.

On the night after the formal opening, Friday 19 October, the Mayor held a grand soirée in the Town Hall for about 1,200 guests and William Brown was again the guest of honour.

Writing some years later, Picton described Liverpool's new museum and library with pride.

The building is spacious and handsome, and admirably adapted for the purposes of the institution. Its position and aspect are all that could be desired. Standing on a commanding eminence facing the south, with a large open unobstructed area in front, the view of the town from the portico is singularly striking. The contiguous locality is the finest in Liverpool, architecturally speaking. St. George's Hall, the Free Library, the commanding façade of the Railway Hotel, the Alexandra Theatre, the Wellington Column, the equestrian statues of the Queen and Prince Consort, form an artistic group which we might travel far to see surpassed. Soon after the opening of the building, the name of the street was changed, by a vote of the Council, from Shaw's Brow to William Brown Street.<sup>24</sup>

William Brown's name is commemorated in the surviving name of his bank as well as in the name of the street in front of the museum and library. A little over a year after he opened the new library and museum Brown was made a baronet in the New Year's Honours list. He died in Liverpool in 1864, and a year later his merchant bank opened a London office. His firm carried on as Brown Shipley, but within a couple of decades of his death the Liverpool office closed. The

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<sup>23</sup> The portrait by Sir John Watson Gordon is in National Museums Liverpool's collections (WAG 1138), as are two copies of the medal (26.11.13.12 and LIV.2010.117).

<sup>24</sup> James Allanson Picton, 1875. *Memorials of Liverpool: historical and topographical, including a history of the dock estate*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol.2, Longmans, Green & Co., London, & G.G. Walmsley, Liverpool. p.301.

Brown Shipley bank continues today as one of a group of private banks owned by the KBC Group NV, one of Europe's largest financial companies.

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### Chapter 3 – 1860-1890 – The new museum

Thomas Moore, the museum's curator, and John Stuart Dalton, the town librarian, set about equipping the new museum and library building for opening to the public. Dalton quickly transferred the library's stock from the old building in Duke Street, and opened for business on 3 December 1860, within a few weeks of William Brown handing over the building.

The museum took longer. Moore vacated the building on Slater Street, which for a few years Liverpool artist William G. Herdman used for occasional exhibitions of pictures. In the new building Moore complained about the dampness of the walls and the time taken to acquire and install display cases. He finally got the museum open to the public on 18 October 1861, exactly a year after William Brown handed over the building.

When it first opened the grand entrance hall was fitted out with casts of classical statues, and the upper floor with displays mainly of birds from the Earl of Derby's bequest. The remainder of the museum was not ready to open and remained shut for a further ten months, until 14 August 1862.

The backbone of the museum was still the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby's founding collection from Knowsley Hall. His son, the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby showed the Prince and Princess of Wales round the library and museum on their visit to Liverpool on 31 October 1865.

The museum's direction began to shift when Joseph Mayer donated his amazing collection of art, antiquities and ethnology in 1867.

Mayer had first offered to make over his collection to the city in 1856, but the discussions came to nothing and were put aside for more than a decade. Early in 1867, Joseph Mayer announced that his collection would go to the museum, and the contents of his houses in Colquitt Street were moved to William Brown Street.

Picton proposed that the council should show its gratitude to Mayer by commissioning a statue of him for the great hall of St George's Hall. Mayer chose the London sculptor Giovanni Fontana, and the statue was unveiled in September 1869. The council also agreed to appoint a curator for his collection in the museum. The first was H. Ecroyd Smith, who held the post for four years, and he was replaced by Charles Tindal Gatty. For years to come the museum would have two parts – the *Mayer Museum* of art and antiquities led by Gatty,

and the *Derby Museum* of natural history led by the head of the museum, Thomas Moore.

Some of Mayer's collection went on display without too much disturbance to the sculpture in the entrance hall or to the natural history collections already laid out.

Even though it was free, visitors entered the museum through turnstiles. They arrived in a large hall, with, in the middle, a statue of Lady Godiva, mounted on her horse for her ride through the streets of Coventry and naked but for her long hair. Along the sides of the hall were plaster casts of antique sculptures, and a few Victorian sculptures. At the far end of the hall, a staircase led up to a series of five rooms with the specimens of Lord Derby's collection arranged by Thomas Moore to show animals from 'higher' to 'lower' forms. Birds shared four rooms with displays of molluscs and other invertebrates, and reptiles and fish shared a fifth room with insects. Next was a picture gallery with a collection of porcelain lent by the then M.P. for South Lancashire and future Prime Minister, William Gladstone, and, over the doorway, the large painting *The Hunted Slave* by Richard Ansdell that today hangs in the International Slavery Museum.

Downstairs Lord Derby's collection continued with three rooms of mammals. Among them was the skeleton of a hump-backed whale which was stranded in the Mersey near Speke in the year 1863.

In all, natural history displays occupied eight rooms, while Joseph Mayer's collection was shown in three rooms. Porcelain and pottery was in a room upstairs, antiquities were in a room on the ground floor; and ancient Egyptian material was in a room in the basement. The balance of the displays shifted after a few years when a courtyard to the west of the great hall was made into a gallery for Mayer's collections. It was roofed over and given cast iron staircases and a gallery, a style of design common to museums of the time and similar to what may still be seen today at nearby Warrington Museum.

In the basement, at the furthest end, was a door leading to the Aquarium, the most popular display in the museum. It measured 15 metres by 8 metres and housed over forty tanks of different sizes with reptiles, amphibians, fish and aquatic invertebrates.

The final feature of the museum in its early days was a *Gallery of Science and Inventions*, William Brown's particular contribution to the displays. In 1861



William Brown formed a committee of delegates from five learned and trade societies to run a *Liverpool Gallery of Inventions and Science* on the first floor of the new museum. Brown expected 'that Inventors and Manufacturers will be glad to avail themselves of the opportunity of making known the products of their ingenuity and labour'<sup>25</sup>. The gallery was ready in 1862 but no exhibitors had come forward. Two members of Brown's committee were detailed to find exhibits and arranged that, when the International Exhibition closed in London in November 1862, some of the exhibits could be freighted to Liverpool on the railway. The only cost would be 'cartage from the railway station and fixing in the building'. Requests for money from the Library and Museum Committee and the council itself were turned down, so Brown offered £100 and other members of the committee came up with smaller amounts. The Gallery of Inventions and Science opened and remained open for a decade or so, but Thomas Moore did not rate it a success.

The council's annual bill for running the new museum was £3,209 16s 6d, against a total of £1,205 7s 10d for the old museum on Duke Street – an increase of 166%. However the number of visits rose by 226%, from 98,597 to 321,714 when the museum moved to its new premises, and continued to rise in the following years. The museum was open to the public for four days each week. Tuesdays and Fridays were reserved for cleaning and for visits by students and artists, and the museum was shut on Sundays.

During the summer of 1864 the daily total of visits exceeded 5,000 on seven occasions; and on three days the number of visitors were 7,495, 8,277 and 8,903, causing some severe congestion.

From 1866 a series of Monday evening lectures at the museum ran every year between January and March. Thomas Moore followed the themes of his displays with twelve lectures on *Zoology with special reference to the Specimens in the Museum*, beginning with the *Lowest Forms of Animal Life* and ending with *Mammals*. The library next door also ran winter lecture programmes and attracted larger crowds. The Library's 41 lectures between January and March 1879 attracted 14,906 people. The series opened with *Books* by James Allanson Picton, which was followed by *What is Science good for?* by the Reverend Henry Higgins.

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<sup>25</sup> 1861. *Liverpool Gallery of Inventions and Science –first annual report of the committee and the proceedings of the aggregate meeting of the five societies held on 30th October, 1861*, Liverpool.

Evening opening of the museum in the winter of 1864 had a disastrous effect on young fish in the aquarium. On one Monday evening a hundred young salmon of only a few days old, died in the aquarium. Sixty died on the following Monday evening. Gas lighting was blamed and none died on the next Monday when the aquarium was not lit up. Evening opening was discontinued with the arrival of spring.

After the move to William Brown Street the trickle of donations to the museum increased to a stream and then a flood. Thomas Moore's instructions for merchant sailors and travellers on collecting items for the museum were published in the *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool* for 1862, and the captains who donated the most and the best specimens to the museum were made associates of the society. Thousands of natural history specimens, both dead and alive, poured into the museum. An American captain came up with a method of transporting smaller fish and other aquatic creatures in glass globes suspended from the roofs of cabins. This sample of acquisitions comes from 1864 -

An Extensive Collection of Fish, and Specimens of Crustacea, Cephalopods, Starfish, Shells, Insects &c. from Singapore; presented by Robert Baker, Esq.

A very Extensive and Interesting Collection of Marine Specimens collected on the voyage to and from Shanghai; presented by Captain, F.E. Baker, Ship *Nippon*.

...A Coat made of Salmon Skin from the Amoor River; a Coral; a Snake from West Indies; Three Bottles of Snakes, Fish, Insects, Porpites, a Lizard &c., from Mazatt; Two Turtles (*Caouana caretta*), and the stern of the Barque *Edwin and Lizzie* broken by a Whale; presented by J.O.W. Fabert, Esq.

A fine Specimen of Brown Quartz, from Cornwall, presented by Mr. Fairbairn...<sup>26</sup>

The captains of trading ships set up exchanges with museums and other collectors around the world speeding up the acquisition rate for natural history specimens. Captain Perry, of the *ss Humbolt* worked on contacts with museums

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<sup>26</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum and Gallery of Arts, 1864. *Twelfth Annual Report*, November, pp.7-12.

in Lisbon and Buenos Ayres, the Natural History Society of Montreal, and a doctor in Rio de Janeiro. Captain Howison, of the *ss Navarre* arranged for three living young sturgeons to be sent from the aquarium at the Zoological Gardens, Hamburg, in exchange for living specimens of Norway lobster.

As specimens came in from round the world, museum staff also carried out local research and collecting. Thomas Moore was an active member of the Liverpool Biological Society, and Frederick Price Marrat a part-time assistant at the museum, collected and worked on shells, minerals and fossils, as he had done previously for the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby at Knowsley.

The enthusiastic councillor and museum volunteer, Reverend Henry Higgins spotted that fossils were being revealed by work on new railway cuttings at Ravenhead on the line between Liverpool and St. Helens. The site was about 1½ miles from his house. He visited over a hundred times in less than a year, and paid the workmen a few pennies or small amounts of tobacco to save fossils for him. He amassed a considerable collection of fossils of flora, fish and bivalves with some insects. It was donated to the museum and was published by Higgins and Frederick Price Marrat.

While Moore and Higgins continued their focus on the natural world, James Allanson Picton began to agitate for an art gallery. As soon as the new museum and library building was finished in 1860, his committee had changed its name to the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum and Gallery of Arts, in anticipation of wished-for developments. The council did not adopt the whole cumbersome name but did allow the title Library, Museum and Arts Committee.

Picton bided his time and then, in 1865, announced that a site for a new art gallery had been identified, just up the road from the library. In fact, he claimed, the site had been intended for an art gallery for some time. Within a year the council was preparing to clear the site and the Borough Architect had started work on plans for the gallery.

On 4 September 1871 the first of a series the Annual Exhibitions of Paintings opened at the museum. Moore and museum staff cleared rooms of museum exhibits, and 887 pictures by contemporary artists went on show. 235 were sold for a total of £6,395 2s 6d, and commission on these sales, Picton claimed, more than covered the costs of the exhibition. Picton pronounced the enterprise a great success, and announced that they would do the same next year.

His committee spent £500 on pictures from the exhibition for what he now called 'the Permanent Gallery'. They bought the large *Elaine, or The Lily Maid of Astolat*, painted 1870 by Sophie Anderson, from the 1871 Autumn Exhibition, and it was not long before *The Death of Nelson* by president of the Royal Academy, Benjamin West, was presented to their new collection by Bristow H. Hughes.

In all, six annual autumn exhibitions of pictures were held in the museum – from 1871 to 1876. As Picton had doubtless hoped, they demonstrated that the museum was not suitable or large enough for the increasingly popular exhibitions. Clearly a permanent and more spacious home for the exhibitions had to be found.

On 10 November 1873 the first act of a new Mayor of Liverpool, Andrew Barclay Walker, was to announce that he would finance the building of a new gallery with a gift of £20,000. The council accepted his offer with alacrity and resolved that the building should be called *The Walker Art Gallery*. Walker, who had a brewery in Warrington and was a Liverpool alderman, was not noted as a patron or collector of art, though he was noted for the architectural standard of his pubs and for giving to good causes. His brewery is long gone but its name survives on many pubs in Liverpool and the surrounding area as *Walker's Warrington Ales*.

The site that was agreed for his art gallery was just up William Brown Street from the library and museum, opposite St George's Hall. Just as Brown had done with the museum, Walker took charge of the building of his art gallery and of financing the works. The Walker Art Gallery opened on 6 September 1877, with the seventh Annual Exhibition of Paintings in the upper floor galleries.

The galley received 324,117 visitors in its first four months, and for the next few years achieved higher numbers of visits than the museum.

As the Walker Art Gallery was being built, the new Picton Library was being constructed next door as an extension to William Brown's library of 1860. It opened on 8 October 1879 and as it is a large circular building, was inevitably nicknamed *Picton's Gasometer* in spite of its classical appearance. It filled the gap between the library and the art gallery and continued Liverpool's great assemblage of Victorian civic buildings. It was also the first public building in Liverpool to be lit by electric lights.

Both Andrew Barclay Walker and James Allanson Picton were knighted by Queen Victoria in recognition of their civic endeavours.

An exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in 1880 showed *Pre-Historic Antiquities of the Mayer Museum and the Ethnographical Collections* mainly from the Joseph Mayer collection in the museum. The exhibition was so successful that the Library, Museum and Arts Committee decided to build an annex to the Walker to show Mayer's ethnology on a permanent basis. The annex was built by 1881 and an ethnology display was installed. But, no sooner was it built, than the committee decided to pull it down again in order to build another extension.

This second extension to the Walker Art Gallery was meant to house the annual autumn exhibition without having to take down paintings already on show, and provide some space for displays from the ethnography collections. Once again Walker provided the finance - £11,720, the entire cost of the new annexe. The Walker Art Gallery extension opened on 30 August 1884 with the annual autumn exhibition of pictures. The idea that it might be used to show a part of the museum's ethnography collections never materialised.

Meanwhile the growth of museum's collections was unabated. Early in 1876 the Reverend Henry Higgins went on a collecting trip, with the museum assistants John Chard and James Woods. They were invited by Reginald Cholmondeley, of Condober Hall, near Shrewsbury, to join him on the *Argo*, a large steam yacht he had chartered for deep sea dredging and collecting in the West Indies. The yacht was away for about four months, and visited the Canary Islands and several West Indian Islands, returning via Philadelphia. Higgins wrote enthusiastically about their adventures in articles and a book. He claimed to have avoided seasickness entirely and took great delight in their dredging operations and the specimens, especially invertebrates that the dredging net brought up. The expedition returned with quantities of fish, insects, crustacea, shells, corals, sponges and mosses for the museum.

In the spring of 1884, Higgins launched what is believed to be the first schools loan service in the country. Duplicate natural history specimens were arranged in sixteen boxes, each a cube of about 60cms and were sent to Liverpool elementary schools for a month at a time. In the first year 64 schools borrowed boxes from the museum. The School Loan Service carried on for decades. In 1935 the museum director reported that three thousand specimens were issued to 197 schools. The ended when the museum closed after it was bombed in 1941.

When Joseph Mayer died in January 1886, his will caused a minor storm by offering to hand over the parts of his collections that had not already been given to the city, for £6,000, at to be paid at £300 a year for 20 years. Sir James Picton,

chair of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee, was furious when the council not only refused to finance this offer for the museum's collection, but also suggested cuts in the branch libraries and the lectures at the central library. Picton was eighty years old and could not help seeing the council's attitude as a threat to his achievements at the library, museum and art gallery. He cited Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and nearby Preston for their more ambitious and enlightened support of their museums<sup>27</sup>. The council remained unmoved, and Mayer's executors sold the collection at Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge, London.

The possibility of Sunday opening for the museum caused controversy when it was raised in the City Council in February 1888. The museum was then open for four days a week. It was closed on Sundays, and was still closed on Tuesdays and Fridays for cleaning, rearranging and access for students. The *Liverpool Review* claimed that some councillors did not want Sunday opening to be discussed and began a vitriolic campaign. It claimed that one councillor played billiards on Sunday, another owned pubs that opened on Sunday, another had visited a brothel, and yet another had been drunk in the Town Hall<sup>28</sup>. It painted a touching picture of a family yearning for Sunday opening at the museum.

(*Little Janie*) : Oh, I would so like to go into the art gallery and museum, mamma, teacher says I'd see such a lot of things that we learn about in school.

...(Children in chorus) : Are they all very good religious men in the council who won't let the buildings be opened papa?

(*Papa, drily*) : Oh, very.<sup>29</sup>

The matter returned to the council early in March. Picton appeared ambivalent on the subject and managed to scupper its chances in council by leaving the meeting early.

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<sup>27</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum and Walker Art Gallery, 1888. *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report*, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> 1888. 'The Spotless Man of Sorrow and the Liverpool Pharisee'. *Liverpool Review*, 4 February, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> 1888. 'Three Scenes on Sunday'. *Liverpool Review*, 25 February, p.3.

Sir James Picton, however, damped the hopes of the advocates of the question for the moment by asking for an adjournment just as the matter seemed within grasp. But the council declined this suggestion 41 to 3. Sir James said he had to go to London by the next train and, therefore, could not remain during the discussion, and by and by this wonderful man of 82 trotted off to his train enveloped in a huge overcoat with an enormous seal collar.<sup>30</sup>

After Picton had left the council meeting, Sunday opening was voted out by 26 to 17.

From October 1888 the museum resumed Monday evenings opening from 7pm to 10pm, and restarted a winter season of lectures. The experiment had been tried in the 1870s but had been abandoned because of the 'disorderly conduct' of some of the visitors. The new season comprised fourteen lectures on Monday evenings between 1 October and 31 December. The first was given by Reverend Henry Higgins and second by Thomas Moore, the curator of the museum.

In 1890 the museum started opening on Tuesdays, which meant it was open five days a week instead of four. On Fridays the museum remained closed for behind-the-scenes work and for students to use the collections. It continued to be shut on Sundays.

The museum settled down to an annual total of about 300,000 visits, and even the extra opening failed to disturb this equilibrium.

As the nineteenth century ended, three most influential figures of the museum's early years died. Picton, Moore and Higgins were the pivotal figures in taking Liverpool's museum from its beginnings to a position of scale and strength, and the three of them died within four years. Sir James Allanson Picton died on 15 July 1889, Thomas John Moore died on 31 October 1892, and Reverend Henry Hugh Higgins died on 2 July 1893.

Picton had been chairman of the council's Library and Museum Committee for nearly forty years. The conscientious Thomas Moore arrived at the museum with Lord Derby's collection in 1852, and worked for forty years until his death at home in Victoria Road, Tuebrook in North Liverpool. Reverend Henry Higgins was associated with the museums for almost the same period - 37 years - and for

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<sup>30</sup> 1888. 'In The City Council: Defeat of the Sunday Question'. *Liverpool Review*, 10 March, p.12.

sixteen years he was chairman of the Museums Sub-committee of Picton's Library, Museum and Arts Committee.

One of Higgins's last achievements pioneered national museum affairs when he became the first president of the Museum Association.

The Museums Association continues today and is the professional organisation for museum staff. Higgins presided at its first conference which was held in Liverpool. The conference opened with a *conversazione* at the museum on Tuesday 17 June 1890. Doors opened at quarter to eight and evening dress was worn.

The proceedings lasted four days and were attended by delegates from sixteen museums. Museum assistants John Chard and Richard Paden gave papers at the conference. Thomas Moore gave two papers - *Notes on the Liverpool Free Public Museum* and *A Plea for Local Geological Models* - and Higgins gave a presidential address.

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## Chapter 4 – 1890-1898 – Electric catfish

Alderman Sir William Bower Forwood at fifty years old was a splendid example of Liverpool's Victorian merchant elite. An experienced, even formidable, politician, merchant and ship-owner, he was Mayor of Liverpool in 1880 and he was knighted in 1883. Sir William was elected a member of the board of directors of the Cunard Company in 1888. He and his older brother Sir Arthur Bower Forwood ran the West India & Pacific Steamship Company, and had extensive family interests in trading and shipping.

When Sir James Picton died, Sir William replaced him as chairman of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee, after a short interlude with Alderman Edward Samuelson in the chair. He picked up on Picton's theme that Liverpool's greatness should be reflected in cultural institutions of exceptional quality. Like Picton, he complained that paying for them from the rates at one penny in the pound was only half of what other towns spent.

It is most difficult to bring home to the minds of men that the education and culture of people is as essential to their happiness and the welfare of the community as drainage and a good water supply is to their health...<sup>31</sup>

Sir William's chief ambition as the new champion of culture in the city was to increase the number of branch libraries. His chief delight was to lead the spring trips to the London studios of artists such as Lord Leighton and the ageing Pre-Raphaelite John Everett Millais to discuss the Annual Exhibitions of Pictures at the Walker Art Gallery.

After the curator Thomas Moore's death in 1892 there was a sixteen month gap before the arrival of a new director for the museum. Richard Paden was appointed assistant curator of the museum and filled the vacuum. He had worked at the museum since 1864, and when Moore died he was updating the museum's pioneering schools loan service. He held a consultative meeting with head teachers and with science teachers. Then he put together new cabinets with a selection of mechanical and physical apparatus to illustrate useful technical principles, and published a catalogue of the collection for Liverpool's elementary schools. While Paden was in charge of the museum, an exceptional collection of agates arrived from the bequest of the 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby, grandson of the Earl who had started the museum with his bequest of natural history specimens.

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<sup>31</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum and Walker Art Gallery, 1894. *Forty-First Annual Report*. Introduction by Alderman Sir William B. Forwood, p.4.

The new director of the museum, Henry Ogg Forbes, took up the post on 20 February 1894. Shortly after he arrived Richard Paden was taken ill, and he died in November, at the age of 44, and having worked about 30 years in the museum.

Forbes was forty-three years old when he arrived in Liverpool and already had a remarkable career behind him.

He studied medicine at Aberdeen University and at Edinburgh under the great surgeon Joseph Lister. The loss of an eye ended his medical studies and he switched careers to become an ornithologist with an interest in ethnology and cartography. He went to Portugal as a scientific collector in the 1870s, and to the East Indies from 1878 to 1884. When he returned to England he produced *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago: a Narrative of Travel and Exploration from 1873 to 1883*. Then he set off on an expedition to New Guinea. On the way he lost his equipment and, after several attempts to rescue the mission and stints as a government agent and a meteorological observer, he returned to England disappointed in 1888. In 1890 he was appointed director of the Canterbury Museum in New Zealand.

Henry Forbes arrived in Liverpool with an ambition that the museum should be the most popular in Britain. He compared 1893 visit numbers for museum - 299,319 - with those of the British Museum of Natural History - 408,208 - and the British Museum - 538,560. Considering the difference in size between London and Liverpool, Forbes thought that these figures were very satisfactory, but he announced that the Liverpool museum would attract many more visitors if the collections were better organised. His first moves were to arrange for previously unseen ethnology collections to go on display in the museum's basement, and to improve the aquarium.

Liverpool's Lord Mayor opened the new ethnographic gallery on 19 June 1895. The basement rooms had been gutted, their walls boarded with varnished pine, and cases of polished hardwood fitted in. The Assistant Curator, Peter Entwistle, had worked on the Joseph Mayer's gift for nearly twenty years, and this was his first 'permanent' display of Mayer's ethnographical treasures.

In the aquarium new plate-glass fronts improved visibility, and an extra supply of water from the mains fed the freshwater tanks and gave more power to the aerating pumps for the salt-water tanks. To improve the aeration in freshwater tanks water was brought in at the bottom rather than at the top. The list of creatures in the aquarium showed an impressive variety of species including a

'New Orleans alligator', a 'West African crocodile', and a giant North American salamander called a 'Hell Bender' that was said to have lived in its tank for fourteen years.

A number of the more exotic species were gifts from Arnold Ridyard, chief engineer of the Elder Dempster Line. Elder Dempster was one of the UK's largest shipping companies and the major shipping line to serve West Africa. It was based in Liverpool and during its 150-year history operated more than 500 ships. Ridyard had an agreement from the owners that he could transport material for museums and especially for Liverpool's museum. For about twenty years, he brought in an amazing stream of natural history, ethnography and live specimens.

Ridyard caused great excitement with some live electric catfish in April 1895. He brought them from the Gambon River in West Africa, feeding them worms, small fishes, and pieces of boiled liver during the long sea journey. When they arrived in the museum's aquarium, Professor Gotch, Professor of Physiology in University College, Liverpool, set out to investigate how they made their electrical discharge.

Gotch and Forbes took an electric catfish to London to show at a conversazione of the Royal Society on 1 May 1895. Several hundred of the guests, including Queen Victoria's son, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and her cousin-in-law, the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Teck, put their hands into the fish's tank and received an electric shock. The event lasted for four hours reportedly without tiring the fish. The evening was such a success that Forbes later took the fish to Ipswich and showed it at two more conversaciones of the British Association.

In 1898 Ridyard gave the museum six more electric catfish one of which was 60cms in length and weighed 4kg. He also donated three other catfish, four African lung-fish, twenty mudskippers and three unidentified fish. As well as making personal donations, Ridyard acted on behalf of other donors. He brought from Mr. Forman twenty-one mudskippers, seven of which were transferred to the Zoological Gardens, London, and from W.G. Stokes three young fish from West Africa. The museum had to increase the number of warm water tanks in the aquarium to accommodate Ridyard's annual gifts of fish. By 1900 the aquarium was showing a monster list of creatures including anemones, beetles, shrimps, crabs, snails, eels, fish, frogs, toads, newts, salamanders, a tortoise, snakes, chameleons, lizards, a crocodile and birds. The museum passed on

creatures that it could not handle to the Zoological Gardens, London, including in 1900 cats, a rat, monkeys and a mongoose.

As well as live animals Ridyard brought remarkable ethnographic collections from West Africa. He donated the largest quantity of material to Liverpool's museum, but he also contributed to other museums in the north-west including Salford and Bolton, with everything coming from Africa without freight charges courtesy of Elder Dempster.

A meeting of the British Association took place in Liverpool in September 1896. The president of the British Association was Joseph Lister, the English surgeon who promoted the idea of sterile surgery while working at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and the former teacher of museum director Henry Forbes. A museum assistant, William Shepherd Laverock, was appointed specifically to prepare for the British Association's visit and the museum closed for three weeks to accommodate its meeting. A *Handbook to Liverpool and the neighbourhood* was published for the Association's visit with an essay by Forbes on vertebrate fauna, and an essay on trade and commerce by Alderman Sir William Forwood, chairman of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee.

Laverock and the other museum assistants were allowed to attend relevant meetings during the Association's visit. The geological section met in the museum's small lecture theatre. In the bird gallery Professor Oliver Lodge gave a demonstration of X-rays. In the entrance hall among the ancient Egypt displays, Mr. Whittle showed Foucault's experiment demonstrating the rotation of the earth by a huge pendulum suspended from the top of the hall. In the Aquarium ichthyologists were particularly impressed with the electric catfishes and a group of mudskippers.

In August 1897 Forbes published the first *Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums*. Sir William Forwood welcomed it as a new departure for publishing original research, descriptions of new acquisitions, and catalogues of parts of the collection. Forbes's catalogue of parrots was in the first issue.

In the second edition, Forbes related the acquisition of some exceptional Benin ivories and bronzes for the museum, part of a flood of Benin artefacts taken from the palace of the Oba (King) of Benin in a punitive raid in 1897. Forbes's view of events in 1897 is a snapshot of imperial actions by the British.

The barbarous massacre, “by the orders of the King of Benin and his Councillors”, of members of an official mission pacifically proceeding from the Niger Coast Protectorate Government to visit the King will be fresh in everyone’s recollection. The punitive expedition sent by Her Majesty’s Government, under Admiral Rawson, to bring to account the perpetrators of this terrible outrage, captured the city on 18<sup>th</sup> of February last, and among the spoils interesting to ethnologists were, besides many large elaborately-carved elephants’ tusks and other smaller objects in ivory, a great number of flat plaques, and statuettes in the round, of cast-metal looking like bronze...

The museum has been fortunate in securing some important examples, of which we propose to give an account in the following pages...<sup>32</sup>

Forbes lists and describes a magnificent set of acquisitions of Benin material made in the year of the raid, but gives no further information about how they got to the museum. There were a number of auctions in London and Paris of objects looted from the Benin palaces but the museum’s records do not show purchases from them. Instead the museum bought from various individuals, possibly dealers, and a smaller number Benin items were acquired as gifts by Arnold Ridyard, or by others through him.

Henry Forbes went on an expedition, to the islands of Socotra off the east of Africa. The expedition left late in 1898 and returned in March 1899, and was organised jointly with the British Museum. Forbes and the museum taxidermist, the aptly-named James William Cutmore, went with W.R. Ogilvie-Grant from the British Museum. On the way the expedition landed at Abd al-Kuri, a previously unexplored island between Socotra and Cape Guardafui, the eastern horn of Africa. They spent nearly three months on Socotra, and on the return journey paid a second visit was paid to Abd al-Kuri for a couple of days. The trip yielded about 2,000 specimens, of which 100 were new to science, and Forbes pulled together a total of twenty two experts, including himself, to identify and describe the birds, plants, reptiles, scorpions, centipedes, millipedes, spiders, butterflies, shells, and moths and lichens that the trip produced<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Forbes, Henry O., ed., 1898. *Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums*, vol.1, no.2, February, pp.49-70, Forbes, Henry O., ‘On a collection of cast-metal work, of high artistic value, from Benin, lately acquired for the Mayer Museum’, p.49.

<sup>33</sup> Forbes, Henry O., ed., 1903. *The Natural History of Sokotra and Abd-el-Kuri*. A note at the beginning of the book said ‘This volume is issued as a Special Bulletin of the Liverpool Museums’.

## Chapter 5 – 1896-1918 - Horseshoe Galleries

Liverpool had been raised to city status in 1880. Four years later the City Council bought land next to the museum in 1884 in order to build an extension to the museum and a school for ‘technical education in the arts and manufactures’<sup>34</sup>. The project took some time to get going and years later, in 1896, the council launched a competition for a design for the new building. The city’s Director of Technical Instruction and the museum director Henry Forbes drew up a specification for the building and the council selected architects to submit designs. The winning design was by Edward William Mountford. Immediately after his selection, the council appointed the builders Messrs. Henshaw. On 1 July 1898 Alderman Sir William Bower Forwood, chair of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee, laid the foundation stone of the museum extension and Liverpool Central Technical School.

The two floors of the museum extension were at the level of the ground floor and upper floor of the existing museum, yet, because the street sloped down, they also sat on top of three new floors for the Technical School. The new museum floors comprised two giant horseshoe-shaped galleries, each of 1,500 square metres and called the *Upper Horseshoe* and *Lower Horseshoe*<sup>35</sup>.

Henry Forbes started drawing up plans for exhibitions in the extension soon after he arrived in Liverpool in 1894, and he continued to develop them as the building went up. He said that the collections were simply crammed in the old museum’s display cases. The mammal gallery was worst with animals stacked up, and many other creatures were placed wherever they could be fitted rather than in a logical order. He said that the museum should be “a book with its pages open and its narrative so clearly set out, that they are unawares following a connected story, unfolded from room to room before their eyes, which may excite their interest and further attention”<sup>36</sup>. Forbes was not short of advice on his plans. Liverpool Biological Society and the Liverpool Geological Society both discussed

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<sup>34</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Library, Museum and Walker Art Gallery, 1886. *Thirty-Third Annual Report*, p.3

<sup>35</sup> Modern visitors to World Museum will find *Bug House* in the Lower Horseshoe and *World Cultures* in the Upper Horseshoe.

<sup>36</sup> Ford, W.K., 1955. ‘Notes of the Earlier History of the City of Liverpool Public Museums’. *Liverpool Libraries, Museums & Arts Committee Bulletin*, November, vol. 5, nos.1 and 2, p.11.

the matter in 1901 and sent reports on their views to the council's Museums Subcommittee.

The building work next door proved awkward for the running of the museum. In 1900, it was shut for eight months while electric lighting and new heating and ventilation systems were installed. As a result the museum was only open for 90 days in the year and the number of visits was the lowest ever at 95,041. The number had been 310,482 in the previous year. Sir William claimed that all the disturbance would all be worthwhile because of the 'magnificent accommodation that will be afforded by the new galleries when completed'<sup>37</sup>. The biggest galleries, the two new Horseshoe galleries, would, he claimed, be bigger than anything at the British Museum.

In the meantime, though it was overstuffed with exhibits and suffering from the building work around it, the old museum had to manage.

At the same time as suffering building works next door, the area around the museum was being developed. Opposite the museum, and at the back of St George's Hall, the disused St. John's church was demolished in 1899 and replaced with a small park populated with statues of distinguished Liverpudlians. It was planned by the council surveyor, Thomas Shelmerdine, and was finished in 1904.

There were major road works outside the museum. William Brown Street was widened in order to improve access to the bottom of the street and the new Technical School and tramlines were laid up the new street. The terrace leading to the front of the museum was demolished and replaced by the present flight of about 39 steps up to the grand portico and the museum entrance.

The Duke of Devonshire opened the Technical School on 26 October 1901, but the top two floors of the building, the museum extension, were not finished.

The museum extension was finally handed over in July 1902. In total the building had cost £80,000<sup>38</sup>.

Forbes began the task of fitting it out with displays – a task which took more than four years. In 1903 Haigh & Co. of Liverpool delivered 74 new metal cases for the

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<sup>37</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Museums, 1900. *Forty-Seventh Annual Report, 1900 (Reprint of the General Report and of the Museums' portion only of the Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museums and Walker Art Gallery)*. p.1.

<sup>38</sup> Forwood, Sir William B., 1910. *Recollections of a busy life*. p.116

new galleries, and Forbes and his staff started rearranging the museum. This meant redoing displays in the old museum and well as setting up displays in the new Horseshoe galleries. The museum extension would finally open in October 1906.

Part of the reorganisation of the old museum was an extension to the aquarium. Eleven new aquarium tanks displaced North American ethnography displays in the museum basement. Forbes and an engineering lecturer in the Technical School called Honiball came up a system of aeration for the salt-water aquarium tanks using rattan-canes to the bottom of the water, instead of metal pipes. The system produced extremely small bubbles that were reckoned to be better at oxygenating the water and maintaining the health of the occupants.

The specimens for the extended aquarium were found with the help of the council's Sanitary Sub-Committee and the City Engineer's Department who operated the barge *Beta* on the Mersey. Captain Griffiths of the *Beta* brought living specimens back from his dredging operations, and he occasionally took museum staff on his trips. He also brought back fresh seawater for the aquarium from beyond the North-West Lightship at the mouth of the Mersey. In the summer of 1905 a common seal was brought into the aquarium, possibly by Captain Griffiths. It was kept in one of the new aquarium tanks where it lived for about ten years. According to Forbes's reports, it was in good health and it quickly became one of the museum's main attractions.

Henry Forbes worked hard to keep interest in the museum while, behind the scenes, work went on new displays. He gave a lecture in the museum on *The Mummy*, the last of the winter's series of lectures and its climax. He illustrated the lecture with items from the museum's collection, lantern slides and the unwrapping of a mummy of a woman from about 600BC. Forbes reported that the audience witnessed that '...the face was found in a remarkable state of preservation, the hands crossed upon the breast, but the flesh had apparently been removed from the limbs before enswathement of the body'<sup>39</sup>.

On 26 April 1905, staff discovered a case in the antiquities display had been opened and a snuff box, signet ring, and seal belonging to Napoleon had been stolen. The police were at once informed, and the Library, Museum and Arts Committee offered a reward of £200. Handbills with full descriptions and

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<sup>39</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Museums, 1904. *Fifty-first Annual Report (Reprint of the General Report of the Museums' portion only of the Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museums and Walker Art Gallery)*. p.6.



drawings of the articles were circulated, and the seal was spotted in a pawnbroker's shop in Liverpool. The woman who took it there was found and her son admitted taking the seal out of the case. The other items were not recovered.

Henry Forbes finally published his scheme for the new museum displays in 1905. His vision was the first to incorporate collections natural history and human cultures into a museum of the world. He also identified space for a separate display on Liverpool. His 'local' room for local history and archaeology was the first time that Liverpool's history was acknowledged as a separate subject in the museum.

The Upper and Lower Horseshoe galleries were designated for natural history displays. Natural history was arranged systematically with zoological, geological, mineralogical and botanical sections. In seventeen months the museum's taxidermists, led by J.W. Cutmore, prepared 430 mounted mammals and birds, as well as cleaning and mending 1,945 other mounted specimens and setting up 246 animal skeletons for display.

Their biggest task was to mount a male Indian elephant, presented by Barnum & Bailey Circus. Styled the Greatest Show on Earth, the circus was led by James Anthony Bailey, Barnum having died some seven years earlier. It set up in Newsham Park in Liverpool for three weeks in May 1898. Henry Forbes visited the circus menagerie and met James Bailey. He praised the standards of animal welfare in the menagerie, and, as a result, when a giant kangaroo died during the circus's stay in Liverpool, it was given to the museum. Then Bailey decided that his second largest elephant, Don Pedro, should be 'euthanised' because he was becoming aggressive. He was offered £50 for the carcass but Bailey decided to give it to the museum. Forbes attended the execution on 15 May 1898, along with a representative of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Don Pedro was to be strangled, and so ropes were wound three times round its neck. A large pulley was attached with ninety burly circus-workers on the end of the rope. At 8.30 in the morning the command was given to 'take up the slack', and then 'now then, men, walk away with it'. Forbes said of the execution 'it was perfect, and so quickly accomplished that the beast did not suffer at all.<sup>40</sup>' The elephant's body was loaded onto a heavy wooden cart which was pulled to the museum by a large traction engine.

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<sup>40</sup> *Liverpool Echo*, 16 May 1898, quoted in Fisher, Clemency T., 1986. 'The Greatest Show on Earth: Barnum and Bailey's circus animals in the collections of Merseyside County Museums'. *Museums Journal*, vol.85, no.4, March. pp.196-197.

The relationship between Forbes and Bailey continued to bear fruit after the circus had left town. Bailey sent the museum gifts of an antelope, a puma, a polar bear and a chimpanzee. When the museum taxidermists led by James Cutmore had finished their work, Don Pedro went on show as the centrepiece of the mammal display in the new Upper Horseshoe gallery when it opened in 1906, and stayed there until the museum was burned during the blitz of 1941.

In Forbes's scheme, the 1860 building was set aside for human cultures and was designated the Mayer Museum. As a natural historian, Forbes was keen to classify displays of human artefacts into sections. He came up with a pseudo-scientific arrangement in three sections for human artefacts according to the *races* whose handiwork they are - *Caucasian* (white), *Mongolian* (yellow) and the *Melanian* (black). His Mongolian Gallery included China, Japan, Malaya and America, and occupied the top floor of the Mayer Museum. Objects of Caucasian origin were in the main entrance hall and its surrounding balcony. He classified Ancient Egypt as Caucasian and Forbes made it the central feature as visitors entered the museum. The Melanian exhibits from Africa, Melanesia and Australia were in the museum's basement.

However his classification system strikes us, Forbes was the first to be explicit about the museum's grand ambition to display a microcosm of human cultures and natural history from around the world, or at least from the parts of the world associated with the British Empire. The collections of Liverpool's museum were larger than most because of the city's international maritime connections through its port and the strength of its foundations in the Derby and Mayer collections. The quality of its collections supported the encyclopaedic ambition of Forbes's scheme for the museum.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby opened the new galleries on the evening of 19 October 1906. Alderman Sir William Bower Forwood and Lady Forwood welcomed 1,700 guests. They were led in procession to the new Lower Horseshoe gallery, where there were speeches. An address presented to Lord Derby in a silver casket claimed that 'the Museums now opened contain the largest and most complete Natural History and Ethnographical collections in the Provinces'<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Museums, 1907. *Fifty-Fourth Annual Report, 1907* (Reprint of the General Report and of the Museums' portion only of the Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museums and Walker Art Gallery). p.10 - extract from an 'address, contained in a silver casket, was presented to Lord Derby'.

A door from the Museum entrance hall to the library was opened up and tea, coffee and ices were served in the Brown Reading Room. There was music in the Picton Reading Room by the City Police Band and by the Misses McCullagh - Miss Helena McCullagh on the pianoforte, Miss Isabel McCullagh on the violin and Miss Mary McCullagh on the violoncello.

With the museum finally open, Sir William resigned as chairman of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee, and Councillor Frank J. Leslie took his place. The partnership of Forwood as chairman of the museum's governing committee and Forbes as director of the museum had proved at least as effective as the three way partnership of Sir James Allanson Picton, Thomas Moore and the Reverend Henry Higgins. Both Forwood and Forbes were men of energy and enthusiasm, and, though Forwood often appeared to have more ambition for the library service and the art gallery, they produced a museum with ambition to represent the world through its natural history and its human cultures.

With the museum open and Forwood gone, Forbes turned back to increasing the collections. The new chairman Councillor Leslie announced that over sixteen years additions to the museum's collections had averaged 23 for each working day.

The Library, Museum and Arts Committee contributed £100 towards excavations in Egypt by the notable and colourful archaeologist John Garstang, who was honorary reader in Egyptian archaeology at University of Liverpool and shortly to become Professor of Methods and Practice of Archaeology there. But Forbes and Garstang fell out over the distribution of finds from his excavations. There were ten shareholders and Forbes complained that most of the museum's share were duplicates, and all were broken into small bits. The committee did not subscribe to Garstang's next season of excavations.

In 1909 Liverpool's Parks and Gardens Committee transferred their Botanic Gardens herbarium collections of over 40,000 dried specimens to the museum. They were apparently fearful that the daily routine of maintaining the parks left no time for the care of this historic collection.

Henry Forbes retired in 1911 at the age of sixty and Joseph A. Clubb was appointed in his place. Forbes remained active in learned societies and was awarded the title Consulting Director of Museums to the Corporation, an honorary post that he held until his death. After he retired Forbes made one more expedition - the Peruvian Government commissioned him to investigate

the birds of the Guano Islands and to make proposals for their conservation and for the economical working of the guano deposits. He died at Selsey on 27 October 1932.

Joseph Clubb, the new curator of the museum, was as keen as his predecessor to keep adding to the museum's collections. He claimed that over 100,000 items had been added to the collections in fifteen years - 89,500 natural history items and 11,756 ethnography items. He also made a concerted effort to acquire material for the museum's local history gallery. But his main interest was education, and especially working with schools.

School parties were visiting in increasing numbers especially after a Board of Education code of regulations allowed museum visits to be reckoned as school attendance. The schools loans collections started by Reverend Henry Higgins in 1884, now contained over 1,000 scientific objects, and went out to 103 elementary schools. Joseph Clubb was made joint secretary of a British Association committee looking at education work in museums.

In October 1913 William S. Laverock, assistant in the botanical and geological departments of the museum, set off for an expedition to Malaya. He was invited by H.C. Robinson, director of museums in the Federated Malay States. Robinson was born in Liverpool and had worked at the museum before moving to Malaya. Laverock travelled for eight months courtesy of the powerful Liverpool shipping company Alfred Holt & Co. He brought back many thousands of specimens of Malayan flora and fauna, mineralogical and geological specimens, as well as numerous regional artefacts. Laverock later described this expedition as a thrilling episode in his somewhat humdrum museum life<sup>42</sup>.

Clubb set about remodelling parts of the old museum building. First he provided a new and larger case for the seal that had been in the museum for nine years. He ripped out the turnstiles inside the main entrance, improving the welcome to the museum - but made the counting of visits less accurate. Mahogany partitions were removed to open up the way from the entrance to the main hall of the museum. Percy Newberry, Brunner Professor of Egyptology in the University of Liverpool, was called in to look at the Egypt display in the main entrance hall.

Arnold Ridyard's gifts of West African material to the museum passed 5,000 just before the First World War, and in 1916 made his last donation to the museum

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<sup>42</sup> 1947. 'Obituary. William Shepherd Laverock (1865-1947)'. *North Western Naturalist*, vol.21, September-December 1947. pp.285-287 - p.285.

and retired. At that time he was reckoned to have given, or arranged for others to give 6,450 specimens, 2,481 of which went to the ethnography collections, and 3,969 to the natural history collections, including 1,585 for the aquarium. Clubb acknowledged that the West African collections came almost entirely through Arnold Ridyard and had been carried free of charge on ships of Elder Dempster & Co. Ridyard had about 180 contacts along the western coast of Africa, a significant number of whom were freed slaves or their descendants from the Creole people of Sierra Leone.

In the latter years of the First World War the museum was pressed into educational service when several of the Liverpool's elementary schools were converted into military hospitals. The museum's galleries were used for afternoon demonstrations to large classes of elementary school children.

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## Chapter 6 – 1919-1940 - Experiments

Opened in 1900 New Brighton Tower was a towering landmark at the mouth of the Mersey on the opposite bank to Liverpool. Like the relatively nearby Blackpool Tower, it was based on the Eiffel Tower, but was taller than Blackpool's by about 15 metres. It had only been open for fifteen years when it was closed down for the First World War. After the war, when the New Brighton Tower Company came to reopen their tower, they found that its metalwork had been neglected and had rusted. It could not be opened to the public.

The tower was demolished over three years, starting in May 1919, but before work could begin, its resident seal had to be rehoused. He had been caught along with seven other seals in the North Sea in about 1916, and was the only one still alive. The New Brighton Tower Company decided to present him to the museum, and the museum was happy to receive him. The museum's previous seal had arrived in 1905 but had recently died leaving his tank empty and ready for a new tenant. The new seal was named Paddy after the man who had looked after him in the New Brighton Tower, and quickly became a major attraction. He was sleek and silver-grey, and spent many years at the museum swimming round his tank, usually on his back, gazing at visitors.

The museum opened on Sundays for the first time, though it remained closed on Fridays for cleaning, for arranging exhibits and for the use of students. Finally in 1922 the last students' day was abolished and the museum was open seven days a week.

When the extended museum had opened in 1906, it had a separate room for a display of Liverpool history, and planted a seed that was bound to grow. In the 1920s the campaign for more Liverpool history was led by the maritime historian Robert Gladstone, great-nephew of former Prime Minister William Gladstone. He campaigned for displays of Liverpool's maritime history, not just in the existing museum but in a new shipping museum. Alderman Henry A. Cole, chairman of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee, declared Gladstone's proposal 'an excellent suggestion, and one I heartily support, but I would not limit such arrangements to Shipping'<sup>43</sup>. Alderman Cole's suggestion was for a museum of all of Liverpool's history, not just its maritime history. However it was the demand for a new separate shipping museum that was eventually taken

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<sup>43</sup> Liverpool Committee of the Free Public Museums, 1925. *Seventy-Second Annual Report, 1925* (Reprint of the General Report and of the Museums' portion only of the Report of the Committee of the Free Public Library, Museums and Walker Art Gallery). p.5.

up first. For the meantime a separate gallery showing ship models and maritime paintings was opened in the museum in 1931.

Joseph A. Clubb retired in July 1926 and was presented with a gold watch and chain. He had been at the museum for 31 years, starting as assistant curator of the Derby Museum in January 1895, and taking over as Director when Henry Forbes left in 1911.

The new director, James J. Simpson, was Keeper of the Department of Zoology in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, before he came to Liverpool. He started work as museums director in Liverpool on 1 August 1926.

Among Simpson's first acts was to produce an *Old Liverpool* exhibition for a special Civic Week in 1926, when all three institutions on William Brown Street, the Walker Art Gallery, the library and the museum, stayed open one evening, and attracted an estimated 5,000 people. The open evening was repeated for Civic Week in the following year. A special exhibition at the museum combined African ivory carvings, Asian costume and Liverpool clocks and watches, and the open night attracted over 10,000 visitors to the art gallery, library and museum.

In the same year, the museum attracted 4,729 school children in groups from 40 schools and colleges and one orphanage. On these visits one of the curators frequently gave a talk to the group. The museum also kept up its tradition of sending out specimens on loan to Liverpool schools. In a year 1,642 boxes of specimens and 210 sets of lantern slides were sent to 107 colleges and schools.

Museum director Simpson was evidently fond of statistics. In the local paper he complained that it cost £3 a week – at least £150 a year – to feed the museum's seal, which he called Edgar, instead of Paddy as it was originally named. A later director of the museum scoffed at this claim saying the seal cost a mere 14 shillings a week to feed.

Though it started well, Simpson's stay in Liverpool began to go wrong in 1928. The chairman of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee reprimanded him for using two council workmen for thirteen hours to help him move house, and asked him to pay for their time. A review of the museum's work by members of the Library, Museum and Arts Committee found friction among staff, and Simpson drew criticism for failing to report to the committee that he had suspended two of them. Simpson's next action was to reorganise his staff, with

the support of the committee, and then, in June 1929, he retired after less than three years in the job, complaining of bronchitis and rheumatism.

After he left Liverpool James Simpson went to work in Turkey researching oceanography and marine biology to improve the country's fishing industry. He had the use of a former Royal palace on the Bosphorus, about six miles from Istanbul, and he set up a marine laboratory on the Sea of Marmora. Then, travelling on the steamer *Kyrenia* from Greece, he was reported missing early one morning in 1936. By early afternoon, after a search of ship, he was given up for lost, and his disappearance was recorded in the ship's log.

When Simpson retired, the deputy director, Peter Entwistle, stood in as acting director from June to September 1929. Entwistle had started as an assistant for the Mayer collection in 1876, and was later Keeper of Ceramics and Ethnology. Soon after his stint as acting director, in December 1929, he retired having worked in the museum for 53 years.

The new director of the museum was Douglas A. Allan, and he started at the museum on 16 September 1929. He was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, where he specialised in geology and took part in Arctic expeditions. From 1925 to 1929 he was a lecturer in geology at Armstrong College, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Douglas Allan's arrival heralded a decade of experiment and development.

The year after he arrived, Allan started winter evening lectures at the museum, a tradition that had lapsed for many years. He held them on Fridays in January, February and March and the average attendance was 161. He considered them so successful that the following year he extended the three-month season to six months, running from October 1930 to March 1931.

Allan set about building a team of heads of museum departments – called *keepers* – covering the main areas of the museum's collections – ethnology, archaeology, vertebrate and invertebrate zoology, botany and geology. The first of Allan's new keepers was Harold Stansfield who started early in 1931 and was in charge of botany. In September 1931, Allan appointed three new keepers: Trevor Thomas for ethnology, Thomas Eden for geology and Elaine Tankard for archaeology. Elaine Tankard was proclaimed the first woman keeper in a city museum. To complete the team Allan promoted two men who had been started as assistants at the museum before the First World War; R. Kempton Perry was



Keeper of Vertebrate Zoology, and C. Hay Murray, Keeper of Invertebrate Zoology. The new band of keepers set about introducing new ideas and ways of working to the museum.

The new Keeper of Ethnology, Trevor Thomas, carried out a review of the African collections with J. Withers-Gill, a writer and translator who had worked in West Africa for many years. In 1931, Withers-Gill produced a handbook on the African collections, noting the extraordinary contribution of the late Arnold Ridyard, chief engineer of the Elders Dempster Line. Withers-Gill gave talks in the museum on *Nigeria and its Peoples* and *Forty-Five Years in West-Africa*. He also supervised the redisplay of African material, with coloured triangles as a background in some of the display cases contributed by Trevor Thomas, who had some singular ideas on displays.

Trevor Thomas put together a loan collection of African material and sent it first to the museum in Stockport, and it later to Mercer Park Museum, Clayton-le-Moors. He wrote of his enthusiasm for African culture in a way that is shocking today.

...we have for a long time wallowed in the jazz, which initially was rooted in West Africa, probably because its strong rhythms made too irresistible appeal to our thinly veiled sensual primitive natures. But that a “nigger” should be able to show us the way in art values was really too impossible a suggestion.

Fortunately the tide of artistic opinion has become strong in favour of negro work, and in the Liverpool gallery many fine examples can be seen.<sup>44</sup>

Not long after she started as Keeper of Archaeology at the museum, Elaine Tankard set up a Children's Corner. The display was set up in an alcove on the Lower Horseshoe gallery, with cases of historic British toys and dolls and contemporary dolls and toys from countries around the world. Tankard installed a large blackboard map in the Corner, on which she wrote about interesting world events. She followed up the children's display with three special afternoon lectures for children at Christmas, with about 250 children reported as attending each lecture.

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas, Trevor, 1935. 'Wonders of Liverpool Museums; How the Department of Ethnology Aids - The Study of Racial History'. *The Liverpoolian*, May. pp.29 & 33.

Rising numbers of children were visiting the museum in school groups. In 1931, 8,771 children from 173 schools visited the museum, nearly twice as many as five years earlier. The schools loan service sent out 2,987 specimens to 156 schools. Schools also asked for fish from the museum aquarium for school aquariums and ponds, and fish were supplied when possible, as when the museum's aquarium managed an enormous hatching of Brown Trout.

The Keeper of Invertebrate Zoology, C. Hay Murray, asked whether visitors were really learning when they made a trip to the museum. He read a paper at the Museums Association conference in Plymouth reporting that when he had questioned visitors to the museum, 'they all said they had seen "interesting" things, but admitted they had learned nothing'<sup>45</sup>. He suggested that museum exhibits should be more directly instructive.

The botany keeper, H. Stansfield, set up what he described as the first *Gallery of Economic Botany*. It was a flowering of the spirit of the British Empire, showing produce of Empire countries, and suggesting how production of essential commodities could be improved with increased European settlement. The exhibition was opened by Sir John Shuckburgh, Deputy Under-Secretary for the Colonies, on 2 July, 1932, and could have been a response to Hay Murray's concerns that displays were not instructive enough.

As its collections grew, the museum needed more storage space for items not on show. Hay Murray's invertebrate collections got a new store in 1933 when a new Entomological Storeroom was installed in the Upper Horseshoe gallery. The museum also got a new storeroom at the other end of William Brown Street - the Walker Art Gallery was closed from May 1931 until October 1933 for refurbishment, and when it reopened the museum moved into a store in the new extension.

Under Allan's directorship the museum's aquarium thrived. A tank of alligators was ornamented with hanging baskets of palms to add atmosphere, and an electric motor was installed to supply compressed air to the fish tanks. Paddy the seal, having been in the museum for fifteen years, was reportedly happy in the care of museum attendant named Evans, as a newspaper article reported.

Paddy lives almost entirely on herrings. When herrings are difficult to obtain whittings are substituted, but he does not like them nearly so much.

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<sup>45</sup> 1931. 'Visits to museums: Do people learn anything? Results of a Liverpool investigation'. (Liverpool) *Post and Mercury*, 11 July.

At 3.30 every afternoon people gather to see him make very short work of 4lbs of herrings. When the Liverpool Aquarium Society were contemplating adding a seal to their collection some years ago, it was stated that a seal would cost £5 per week to keep, and would need three different kinds of fish, besides other expensive items. But Paddy costs no more than 14s a week.

His coat, which he changes every August, is brown for the first week or so then changes to silver-grey. Although he does not have his coat pressed, he has it sponged down every morning while his tank is being emptied. The toilet over he has an underwater beauty sleep of about fifteen minutes. Some authorities contend that seals do not sleep under water, - they should see Paddy. The extraordinary thing is that he can glide around his tank when it is empty, with a perfect swimming motion.

Although Paddy is the very soul of good nature he is not without a little jealousy. Should Mr. Evans look into another tank too long Paddy makes a great fuss and lashes his water into foam.

Thousands of children would not consider their holidays complete without paying Paddy at least one visit.<sup>46</sup>

Paddy the seal lived on in the museum aquarium until the summer of 1936.

Allan started up a shipping gallery that soon attracted interest and gifts from proud shipowners. Within a couple of years Allan claimed that his display of ship models was second only to that in the Science Museum, London, and was worthy of the Port of Liverpool. By 1935 there had been so many gifts of ship models that Allan produced part two of a *Handbook and Guide to the Shipping Gallery*, part one having been issued only three years earlier.

On 18 July 1934, King George V and Queen Mary opened Queensway, the road tunnel under the Mersey between Liverpool and Birkenhead. Its Liverpool entrance was – and still is – over the road from the museum, and Allan needed no encouragement to mark the momentous opening with exhibitions at the museum. An exhibition of geological specimens, plans, diagrams and photographs showed the stages in the construction of the tunnel, and included a scale model of the spectacular tunnel ventilation system. At the same time another exhibition, *Tunnelling in Nature*, represented the work of animals, birds,

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<sup>46</sup> 1933. 'Liverpool's pet seal: Paddy's life at the museum'. (Liverpool) *Post and Mercury*, 20 September.

insects and plants in tunnelling. The exhibitions were only meant to last for a couple of months, but they were still open at Christmas.

By February 1935, the museum was becoming so popular that its director, Douglas Allan, was becoming concerned about safety. The Liverpool Daily Post reported when he took the matter to the Libraries, Museums, Arts and Music Committee.

...according to Dr. Allan the number of people who crowd into the museum on Sundays is becoming unmanageable. Many of the visitors are very young children, who occupy their time mainly in games of hide-and-seek... It is proposed, therefore, that children must be accompanied by guardians. The limitation of the total attendance at any one time to a figure consistent with both convenience and safety is also apparently desirable.

Following complaints of rowdiness and almost unimaginable crowds at the Liverpool Museums on Sundays, Liverpool Libraries, Museums, Arts and Music Committee yesterday decided to make recommendations to the council...

There was only one door by which exit to the street could be obtained, and the fact that it took twenty to twenty-five minutes to clear the building raised a serious position if any accident occurred.

Answering questions, Dr. Allan said that of these 7,000 persons more than 3,000 were children whose ages ranged from three to twelve years. Many of them played hide-and-seek round the cases. A large number of young men and women used the museum for promenading, and the number of people who were visiting the museum for the purpose of inspecting the exhibits was less than 4,000.

The committee decided to recommend to the City Council that children should not be admitted to the museums on Sunday afternoons unless accompanied by adults, and that when the attendance reached 5,000, further admissions should be regulated according to the numbers leaving.<sup>47</sup>

Annual figures for visits to the museum are scarce at this date, but seem to have peaked around 533,320 in 1936-1937. In 1935 the museum building had a major

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<sup>47</sup> 1935. 'Disorder at the Museum. Sunday Crowd of Nearly 7,000. "Hide and Seek" Round Cases.' *The Daily Post*, 2 February. p.6.

overhaul, though it stayed open to the public throughout the works. The building was rewired with six miles of ducting and twenty five miles of wire, and new two new emergency exits were installed, one at the front and the other at the back of the building.

In the summer of 1935, Douglas Allan and Elaine Tankard went to Brussels for a Museums Association conference, with Councillor John Hamilton, a member of the Library, Museum, Arts and Music Committee. Allan was elected a member of the council of the Museums Association, and served on its Education Committee. After the conference he went to visit museums in Bremen, Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig.

Meanwhile the magazine *Liverpolitan* printed a series of nine articles on *Wonders of the Museum*, specifically intended to promote the museum to Liverpool audiences. Each of the museum's keepers wrote an article on their collections, and each had their portrait photo above their contribution. A new leaflet about the library, museum and the Walker Art Gallery was targeted at visitors to the city. Produced in English, French, German and Spanish, the leaflets were sent to hotels and to the Southern Railway Company which operated trains between the Channel ports and London.

The Keeper of Botany, H. Stansfield, remodelled his *Gallery of Economic Botany* in 1936 with an exhibition *Timber in Aircraft*. When it finished, he remodelled the entire gallery again, and sent the exhibition on tour. *Timber in Aircraft* went to Blackburn Museum, Todmorden Museum and Batley Museum. In the same year, the museum toured exhibitions to Stalybridge Museum and Art Gallery, Halifax Museum and Clayton-le-Moors Museum, as well as sending *Mr. P.H. Naftel's Collection of Japanese Magic Mirrors* to Blackburn Museum.

Lively exhibition activity was complemented by rapid and active collecting. Gifts between 1936 and 1937 included Pacific and Inuit material, a collection of Japanese sword ornaments, rare objects from Borneo, 200 water-colour drawings of local fungi, and a remarkable list of mounted animals, including two African rhinoceros, springbuck, deer, antelope, Thompson's and Arabian Gazelles, a white-maned serow, and a young Gorilla from West Africa. R. Kempton Perry, the Keeper of Vertebrate Zoology took special pleasure in the acquisition of a Spoonbill collected at Formby, Lancashire, in 1922. The Keeper of Geology, David Elystan Owen, set out to build up a study collection of typical British rocks, and contacted quarry owners all over the country many of whom supplied sample rocks.

The list of museum handbooks and guides available at this time was impressive. Priced at sixpence were the Egyptian Collection; the African Collection; the Shipping Gallery Part 1 & 2; British Birds; British Mammals; the Herbarium Collections; and the Gallery of Economic Botany. At threepence were: Manx Crosses; Cypriote Sculptures; Aegean and Hittite Antiquities; and the Tenbosch Collection of Delft Ware.

Starting in 1937 and finishing in 1938 the keepers also wrote a new series of articles for the Norris Green Association's monthly magazine, *Norris Green Community Life*. They were similar to those they had done for the *Liverpolitan* in 1935, and they were intended to encourage the tenants of the relatively new estate in north Liverpool to visit the museum.

As well as working locally, the keepers set up international links with museums in Canada, Finland, India and USSR to exchange exhibits. In exchange for examples of typical British rocks and minerals, museums abroad sent back specimens which would otherwise have been very expensive to obtain.

In September 1938 the Keeper of Ethnology, Trevor Thomas, set off for a year's study leave in USA financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. He spent most time at the Museum of Science, Buffalo, and toured to New York, Washington, and Philadelphia.<sup>48</sup>

In 1939 plans were laid for a conference of the Museums Association conference to be held in Liverpool in 1940, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first conference held in Liverpool in 1890. Douglas Allan, director of the museum, and Frank Lambert, director of the Walker Art Gallery, took the lead in the local organisation of the conference, with help from staff at the Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead, and the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight. However the plans never came to fruition.

As early as March 1938, Douglas Allan and the chairman, of Liverpool's Museums Sub-committee, Alderman Henry M Miller, had been to a conference organised by the Museums Association on air-raid precautions. When they returned to Liverpool they began to discuss preparations for war.

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<sup>48</sup> Trevor Thomas left Liverpool to become Director of the City of Leicester Museums and Art Gallery in 1941. There he started a remarkable collection of German Expressionist art. He left in 1946 and worked for the Arts Council, UNESCO and Gordon Fraser, the greetings-card publisher. In 1963 he was the last person to see the American poet and author Sylvia Plath before she committed suicide.

In August 1939 preparation for air raids got under way more seriously. Keeper of Geology, David Elystan Owen, began sorting the more valuable geology specimens and putting them in the stronger vaults. Keeper of Botany, H. Stansfield, took all the *type* specimens of botany and other valuable specimens, and packed them in air-tight and gas-tight metal cases so that they could be moved quickly. An inner storage vault in the museum, previously used for storage of anatomical material, was converted into a gas-proof chamber for staff.

When war was declared on 3 September 1939, the museum shut for a fortnight, and staff were trained in fire fighting and dealing with incendiary bombs and high explosives. Museum attendants were moved from day shifts to a rota of three eight-hour shifts so that the museum was permanently staffed. At the end of 1940, the museum and library staff formed a volunteer fire watch. Between fourteen and twenty men went on watch from 6p.m. until 8a.m., with supper, breakfast, and bunk beds provided.

The Walker Art Gallery was requisitioned for Food and Fuel controls, with an Auxiliary Fire Service station in the basement.

All the museum's windows and cases were covered with mosquito netting to limit damage from flying fragments. Glass was removed from the inner roofs, and replaced with wire netting. Sandbags were stacked round display cases and larger exhibits, including ancient Egyptian statues. The walls of some storerooms were strengthened.

Many museum treasures had been transferred to safer storage in the basements of the building. Some smaller and more important items were packed up in an inconspicuous box and carried to Martin's Bank on Water Street, in Liverpool's central commercial district. An attendant at the museum, George Youlton later recalled taking three of the museum's great treasures there.

I remember taking some to St Martin's Bank near the Town Hall. Among them were the Mexican Codex or Calendar, the Kingston Brooch – a rare Anglo Saxon find – and the linen girdle that belonged to Ramases the Third. They remained there until we collected them after the war.<sup>49</sup>

As the months went by arrangements were made with owners of country houses in Cheshire and North Wales to store museum collections and slowly material

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<sup>49</sup> 1971. 'Nights of Hell/The fish went down the drain'. *Liverpool Echo*, 21 May.

was moved out of Liverpool to relative safety of the countryside. Among the items that escaped to the country were some ship models, the bird skin and herbarium reference collections and most of the museum's Anglo-Saxon material. But, as Allan said later, there was so much material in the collections and there were so many heavy and bulky items, that by far the larger proportion of the collections stayed in the museum.

The aquarium was used as an air-raid shelter. To the disappointment of some visitors it was closed except to school parties, or people with special permission. Douglas Allan reported that sailors most frequently asked for permission to visit the aquarium. By the end of 1940 it was hard to obtain food for over 300 fishes, and staff began to transfer some to local lakes and ponds.

By the summer of 1940 numerous European refugees were arriving in Liverpool, especially from France. Elaine Tankard installed a large blackboard in the museum's entrance hall, and each day about eleven o'clock in the morning she wrote up a résumé in French of the main news from Liverpool's *Daily Post*. Staff also produced free pamphlets giving a guide to the museum and its collections.

By the autumn of 1940 it was clear that the Museum was a centre of attraction to Service men of all kinds. Indeed the uniforms of the various Free Forces tended to outnumber our own, and the Museum co-operated with the British Council in numerous activities aimed at helping our war-time guests. In one particular field a notable piece of pioneer work was achieved on our own – the provision of free four-page pamphlets, describing the general layout of the Museum and directing attention to the principal exhibits. The first to appear was naturally the English version, and it was followed by others in French, Czech, Polish, Dutch, and Norwegian.<sup>50</sup>

Some of the senior staff gave lectures to troops in the various camps in Lancashire and Cheshire, under a scheme organised by the University of Liverpool.

Early in 1941, Allan opened an information centre in the museum for the victims of air raids. The centre was operated with the Citizens Advice Bureau by volunteers from the museum staff and temporary assistants.

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<sup>50</sup> Allan, Douglas, 1945. 'Liverpool watches the War'. *Museums Journal*, vol. 45, April, p.3.



The German Luftwaffe singled out Liverpool as one of its most strategic targets, making it a prime target for air raids in the early years of the war. In March and December 1940, incendiary bombs burned on the roof of the museum and some crashed through the glass roof-lights and burned on the floor of the upper galleries. The night shifts of volunteers and museum and library staff numbered between fourteen and twenty, and dealt with the incendiary bombs effectively. Allan reckoned that they could manage half a dozen bombs at a time. In one air raid, high explosive bombs fell near enough to make the watchers on the roof of the museum hit the deck. The museum suffered a little damage from the blast and flying debris.

However, the museum's luck did not last. As it turned out, Allan's planning and the preparations of museum staff and volunteers were of little use.

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## Chapter 7 – 1941-1949 – Bombed-out

On the night of 3 May 1941 German bombers dropped about 870 tonnes of high explosive bombs and over 112,000 incendiaries on Liverpool. Buildings and streets were damaged all over the city. A 500lb. (225kg.) bomb fell on Liverpool's library and museum. Both were burned out.

Douglas Allan, the museum's director, described the night's events.

During the night in May there were nineteen men on duty, under Mr. F. Lambert<sup>51</sup>. A fairly fresh wind was blowing. The Alert sounded, and one or more H.E. [high-explosive] bombs fell in a street at the back of the buildings and one at the bottom of the Museum front steps, with the result that most of the glass of the nearby windows and roof-lights was shattered. Sometime later three incendiary bombs fell into the Museum, igniting on impact with the floors of the Economic Botany Gallery, the Palaeontology Gallery and the Oriental Room. They were all extinguished without difficulty, and the floors were left perfectly safe.

Soon afterwards the roof-watchers saw large flares overhead and saw a bomb falling. They flattened out, and an H.E. crashed through the Library roof a few yards away, the subsequent explosion shaking the building. The men immediately descended by an outside turret stair to render aid. At the telephone post below, the Deputy Chief Librarian, two others, and a Liverpool Defence Cadet (runner) were seriously injured by blast and falling masonry, woodwork and books. In the basement two library attendants were buried beneath wreckage. Thus six of the nineteen men on duty were incapacitated and it was an obvious duty of some of their comrades to go at once to their rescue – a duty which became the more impelling as a fire started amid the wreckage and gained rapidly on the trapped men, who were fortunately rescued in time. The combination of fire, a building with windows and roof-lights gone, a fresh wind and much dry paper and woodwork proved far too much for the residue of the Volunteer Fire Guard and other assistance immediately available, and help was procured by the second Cadet on duty, who made several trips under conditions of great danger.

Despite all these factors, the Museums' staff together with the A.F.S. men held the fire at bay on the ground and upper floors for a considerable

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<sup>51</sup> Frank Lambert was the director of the Walker Art Gallery.

time, but in the end their efforts were defeated by the wind, which blew flames and flaming fragments from the Library over the Museum block and drove the flames from the burning roof timbers along the corresponding Museum structures. The men were, moreover, threatened from the rear when burning wood fell down one of the ventilator shafts and started a new fire in the African Basement and the adjoining Pacific Room, a danger which was quite unforeseen. Most unfortunately the Pacific Room had been selected as a relatively safe place to which much valuable material had been removed, on the assumption that any fire would start at the top of the building. It was completely dry and a series of boxes, crates, cabinets and cases, raised on bricks to avoid water from hose-pipes, formed an easy prey to the flames, which spread with amazing rapidity. The new fire thus caused the most serious losses, including much Pacific ethnographical material, the planked and ribbed scale models of fishing craft, the key pieces of the old Liverpool Pottery collection, the Anglo Saxon bronze bowls and some Egyptian antiquities. This room and the Old Liverpool Room above, with the Palaeontology Gallery on top were soon completely gutted.

Meanwhile the fire was slowly creeping along the old-fashioned joists and timbers covered with lath-and-plaster framework (1860), invisible and inaccessible, until a break occurred and it was too late to save that particular section; the roof of the old building fell in. The Horseshoe roof (1906), composed of arched iron girders surmounted by alternate sections of glass and slates, capped with a lead-covered wooden top, while the under surface supported a lath-and-plaster ceiling, presented a dry wooden tunnel, barely two feet deep with only a limited number of manholes, to the advancing fire. It spread rapidly and enveloped the floor and contents of one arm of the Horseshoe Gallery, both main and upper stories being affected. In the other arm, the almost complete wrecking of the cases and exhibits on the top floor was due to the falling of roof debris. Later the Fire Brigade were able to prevent the fire spreading to the Shipping Gallery and the office block on the main floor, where breeze layers between the floorboards served to retard its progress. The former has suffered considerably from water, but the latter is fortunately intact and serves as a base for salvage operations.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Allan, Douglas, 1941. 'The Destruction of the Liverpool City Museums; A Review of Events'. *Museums Journal*, vol. 41, August. pp.105-107.

No-one was killed, but the museum building was devastated, and the library was comprehensively burned out with 15,000 books lost. More than thirty years after the event Frederick Wilkinson, a museum attendant, spoke about it to a Liverpool newspaper.

With staff of the Walker Art Gallery, the libraries and the Technical College, we formed a fire-watching rota. My duties fell on the week before the blitz.

When I arrived at 5.30a.m. on May 4, it was to find the museum in flames. The roof had collapsed and with it a lot of masonry, trapping the fireman's hoses. The main hall with the ventilator shafts and wooden beams had gone up in flames, and I shall never forget seeing the flames sweeping around the galleries.<sup>53</sup>

Galleries in the original 1860 museum building were reduced to scorched and blackened debris. Among the collections which suffered were geology, foreign zoology, entomology, ethnology, and archaeology.

The galleries in the 1906 extension fared better. The shipping, British zoology and African ethnology were damaged by water and fire, but were salvaged. The Upper Horseshoe gallery was however left without a roof and was littered with debris. The Technical College areas under the museum galleries were slightly damaged, but the building remained intact.

Items that had been taken to the basement for safety were badly damaged when, unexpectedly, fire travelled down ventilation shafts. Many of the more valuable ship models had been transferred to the basement and were entirely destroyed. The less valuable ships were left on display and, with three or four exceptions, were unharmed. The important Pacific ethnology material had been divided into two lots for safety, and was all destroyed.

In the basement the aquarium suffered. Frederick Wilkinson remembered his horror at the fate of the fish.

Most of them had been destroyed by fire and smoke. Some were still alive. When I was able, I freed them, swilling them down the drain. I hoped they would make their way into the river – it was all I could do.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> 1971. 'Nights of Hell/The fish went down the drain'. *Liverpool Echo*, 21 May. p.10.

<sup>54</sup> 1971. 'Nights of Hell/The fish went down the drain'. *Liverpool Echo*, 21 May. p.10.

Another victim of the fire was Sammy the seal. Sammy is not recorded in museum papers, but numerous Merseysiders remembered him. He arrived at the museum some time after Paddy the seal died in 1936, and he reputedly died in the fire on the night of 3 May 1941.

The museum was shut, and remained closed for years to come. The museum buildings were so badly damaged they could hardly be used. There was also a risk of further air raids. A few staff were rehoused elsewhere in Liverpool, but most of them, including the director Douglas Allan, and some of the collections were transferred to Galltfaenan Hall in the Vale of Clwyd, about three miles from the market town of Denbigh, and a mile from the villages of Trefnant and Henllan.

Van-loads of material went to their temporary home during the three months of July, August and September 1941. Some of the native fish including, carp, tench and perch had been in tanks nearer the outer walls of the museum, and had survived the fire. They were transferred to a small pond at Galltfaenan.

Parts of the collections that had not been evacuated before the war were now sent to country houses and castles in Cheshire and North Wales.

Halkyn Castle, Halkyn, Flintshire  
Ness, Cheshire  
Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire  
The Rookery, Tattenhall, Cheshire  
Gyrn Castle, Llanasa, Flintshire  
Mostyn Hall, Mostyn, Flintshire  
Rhewl, Mostyn, Flintshire

The least damaged part of the building, the section above the Technical College and the Horseshoe galleries was roofed over temporarily. The 89<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Home Guard took over the Upper Horseshoe gallery as a rifle range, and installed a Sten gun range into the basement gallery where African collections had been shown. The Royal Air Force used the Shipping Gallery for physical training, and the School Health Visitors took office accommodation on the main floor.

Board of Trade assessors surveyed the ruins of the museum and awarded the sum of £79,042 7s 1d in settlement of the museum's War Damage Claim. The Finance Committee of the City Council set up a Suspense Fund so that purchases could be made and repaid later from the money received under the War Damage Scheme.

Allan gamely professed confidence that rebuilding the collections could bring a new and improved museum. Among the earlier purchases from the War Damage (Suspense) Account was a collection of shells and geology specimens bought for £200 in December 1942.

At Galltfaenan staff were naturally anxious to install the best possible fire precautions. The entire electrical installation was rigorously inspected and the recommendations of a long and detailed report were briskly carried out. In case a fire broke out, a huge circular brick tank was built close to the house with a motor pump that was tested every week. The tank held 5,000 gallons of water, which, it was reckoned, would last about forty minutes in an emergency, by which time the fire services would have arrived.

The staff at Galltfaenan laboured on the shattered collections and began to amass new material, not forgetting to take advantage of their stay in the country to record the local wildlife.

By 1944 Allan was ready with a vision for a new museum in Liverpool, and he produced an eight page booklet outlining his ideas. He asserted that 'a museum must be considered first and foremost as an educational instrument, and it is by the satisfactory performance of that function that the expenditure of public funds is justified'<sup>55</sup>. His new museum would be a *Museum of Science and Man*, with an orderly exposition of everything from astronomy to zoology, 'leading up to the highest type of life, man himself...' The press picked up on his vision for a modern 'super museum' with 'at the entrance an illuminated rotating globe to arouse thoughts of the world spinning in space'<sup>56</sup>.

Allan had hardly finished outlining his vision before he was off to a new job. He resigned as director of the Liverpool City Museums on 31 December 1944, and started as director of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, on 1 January 1945. He was replaced by an acting director, R. Kempton Perry, who had started at the museum before the First World War and worked his way up to Keeper of Vertebrate Zoology in December 1929. He was near retirement when he took over as acting director of the museum.

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<sup>55</sup> H.W.W., 1944. 'City Curator Plans Super Museum.' *Evening Express*. 5 July. p.2

<sup>56</sup> Allan, Douglas A., (1944). *Liverpool City Museums Reconstruction*. (undated 8 page booklet) pp.1, 2 & 4.

The appointment of a new director went slowly. A short list of candidates was prepared by July 1945 and a final selection made by September. But the selected candidate was withheld for war work. Dr Charles F. Davidson as well as being a curator of the Geological Museum in London was also Chief Geologist of the Special Investigations Division (renamed the Atomic Energy Division in 1951) and expert on the location of uranium resources. As the Second World War neared its end, the race was on to develop the atom bomb and Davidson could not be spared for Liverpool. The post was re-advertised in December. In January 1946 the appointment was deferred because no-one suitable could be found.

R. Kempton Perry was therefore still in charge when the time came to return to Liverpool from the wartime country retreat at Galltfaenan. In the summer of 1946 staff and collections moved again, this time to the leafy suburbs of South Liverpool, at Carnatic Hall. There was initially no plan to open the hall to the public. It was simply the assembly point for the collections that had been dispersed to country houses and castles after the blitz.

The council hired Carnatic Hall on a long lease and made some basic adaptations to the building for the museum staff and collections, including especially elaborate precautions against fire. Staff started moving to Carnatic Hall in June 1946 and collections followed from July. Among the first to move were ship models and mounted mammals and birds from Tatton Park. It quickly became clear the Carnatic Hall would not be big enough and some of the largest ship models were put in stores on Clayton Street, Liverpool. By the middle of December 1946 Galltfaenan was cleared, and staff and collections were installed in their new temporary home.

For a while press stories from Carnatic Hall were resolutely optimistic. New collections were being assembled, loans were going out to schools, and the number of queries that the staff were answering was increasing. Behind the optimistic façade it gradually became clear that there were no real plans for a new museum.

In September 1947 there was talk of opening up part of Carnatic Hall, but its fire protection was inadequate and it needed an extra pipeline to a tank storing 5,000 gallons of water. There was also talk of opening up nearby Sudley House to the public. Sudley came to the City Council at the end of the Second World War, on the death of Emma Holt, the daughter of George Holt, a leading Liverpool shipping magnate. His house, a large Victorian mansion in extensive grounds, is a surviving merchant's house from the richest period of Liverpool's history. It is

unique because Emma Holt's bequest to the city also included George Holt's remarkable collection of paintings by British artists. In January 1948 the council transferred responsibility for Sudley to its Museums Sub-committee, in order that it might become part library, part art gallery and part museum. However before it could be opened electricity had to be installed. Once the electricity was in, the house was opened to the public on 14 April 1949. At first only the ground floor opened with a library in one room and the best of Holt's paintings in three rooms. The floor of the first floor was not opened as it needed to be strengthened for public use. Any display from the museum collections would have to wait.

R. Kempton Perry retired as director of museums, and for a while the museum was run by the director of the Walker Art Gallery, Frank Lambert. In February 1948 only four serious candidates for director of museums could be found from among 23 applicants. Two of them withdrew, and only two were left. The one who won the job was the remarkable John H. (Harry) Iliffe.

Harry Iliffe trained in classics and archaeology at Cambridge and Bangor and went to Canada in 1927 for his first museum post at the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology in Toronto. In 1931 he moved to Jerusalem as the first director of the new Palestine Archaeological Museum. The museum in Jerusalem was initiated by two notable scholars John Garstang and James Henry Breasted. Garstang was Professor of Archaeology at the University of Liverpool and director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, and Breasted was the founder director of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. Breasted persuaded John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to donate two million dollars to set up and run the Palestine museum. Building work started on 19 June 1930, and Harry Iliffe was appointed to take charge. Iliffe planned exhibits of the development of early man and of contemporary Arab culture alongside the ancient archaeology. Breasted objected to Iliffe's plans to mix contemporary culture and archaeology. Their dispute was referred to an expert committee that upheld Breasted's view that the museum should show only the archaeology. The museum was opened in January 1938. In spite of his spat with Breasted, and in spite of being hit by a bullet from an Arab rifle in April 1939, Iliffe remained there until the League of Nations mandate under which Britain ruled Palestine came to an end in 1948.

Iliffe returned from Palestine and took up his duties in Liverpool on 15 November 1948. It was a gloomy period. The museum was blitzed almost out of existence. The new headquarters in Carnatic Hall were dark and damp. Faced with such an unpromising present, he wasted no time in planning for the future.



The main museum building had been flattened but the later additions, the two Horseshoe galleries were inspected by the City Engineer and Surveyor, and pronounced structurally sound. The council agreed that some of War Damage Compensation could be spent to get them back into use, and Iliffe began to drawn up plans with the city architect and director of housing. There was even talk of showing museum exhibits in part of the Walker Art Gallery, when it could be wrested back from the Ministry of Food.

Several problems emerged. The nurses of the school health service, who had moved into the Horseshoe galleries, were reluctant to leave. Museum workshops and storerooms were an urgent requirement and left little money or space for public galleries. Within two months of Iliffe's arrival, Colonel J.D.R.T. Tilney, chairman of the city's Museums Sub-committee, reported that it could be at least ten years before even a temporary museum would be opened in the Horseshoe galleries.

In May 1949 the city engineer was sent to negotiate with the War Damage Commission about covering the cost of the work. In November the city architect, Ronald Bradbury was instructed to prepare plans for a reconstructed roof to the Upper Horseshoe, and the refurbishment of the museum steps, the entrance hall and Lower Horseshoe.

So began years of thankless planning and campaigning.

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## Chapter 8 – 1950-1955 - Closed

Museum director Harry Iliffe began work in his closed museum in a spirit of cautious optimism. In a lecture to the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society he said that he wanted 'to get a reasonably up-to-date museum functioning within the old shell'. His aspirations were limited to the two Horseshoe galleries, and he estimated the cost of repairing them and access to them at £50,000. With this as his relatively modest ambition, he accepted that, at least for the time being, most of the old 1860 museum would remain a ruin and many important collections would remain in store.

Harry Iliffe and Frank Lambert, director of the Walker Art Gallery, set off in July 1950 for a two-week visit to museums in Sweden, Denmark and Holland to look for new ideas in gallery and museum design. Also in the group were the city architect Ronald Bradbury, and the chairman of the Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee, Alderman Vere Egerton Cotton. When they returned building work to repair the Walker got under way, but Ronald Bradbury's plans for the museum remained on the drawing board.

Harry Iliffe kept his hand in by arranging exhibitions of photographs of archaeological excavations at the Bluecoat Chambers in the middle of Liverpool. His staff, led by Elaine Tankard, the Keeper of Archaeology and Ceramics, at last got a few museum items exhibited at Sudley House. On the strengthened first floor they put a collection of Liverpool Delft 'ship bowls' in one room, a small archaeological exhibition in a second room, and loan exhibitions from the Victoria and Albert Museum in a third room. Downstairs at Sudley, Tankard found a small room to show artefacts from Tibet.

During the summer Iliffe went off for five weeks in June and July on an archaeological expedition to Paphos on the west coast of Cyprus, the site of a famous temple of Aphrodite. He led the expedition with T.B. Mitford of the University of St. Andrews, and Liverpool City Council contributed a hundred guineas towards the costs. It was the first of six summer excavations that Iliffe led. Each time that he was away Tankard took charge at the museum.

In September 1950 the Ministry of Food finally left the Walker Art Gallery, but instead of making space for museum exhibits, two galleries on the ground floor were handed to the library for storage.

As there was still no progress on reviving the old museum, Iliffe set about plans for ones – a maritime museum and a ‘folk’ museum. The chairman of the city’s Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee, Alderman Vere Egerton Cotton, announced the council’s decision to allocate a site near Liverpool’s Pierhead for a maritime museum. The maritime historian Robert Gladstone, great-nephew of former Prime Minister William Gladstone, had been agitating for a maritime museum since the 1920s, and in 1940 he bequeathed £25,901 to go towards the establishment of a museum of shipping in Liverpool. However the bequest and the acquisition of a site did not produce the museum. The realisation of Gladstone’s dream was still decades away.

Cotton also announced that the council had allocated the ‘Olde Hutte’, at Halewood, near Liverpool, as a folk museum. Iliffe described it as a ‘museum of rural life’ revealing its inspiration in Reading University’s Museum of English Rural Life founded in 1951, and the much older Skansen, the pioneering open-air museum located on the island of Djugården in Stockholm, founded in 1891. Iliffe may have visited Skansen on the trip he took to Sweden, Denmark and Holland with Frank Lambert and Ronald Bradbury in 1950. He put out appeals for old farm implements, cottage furniture and craftworkers’ tools hoping to represent disappearing country life and traditions in the new museum. He planned to save entire buildings and transport them to the museum. The chosen site, the Olde Hutte, was an old moated manor house, now broken down and inhabited by two old farmers. Disappointingly the building was found to be riddled with dry rot. It was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Ford’s Merseyside factory, ending Harry Iliffe’s dream of a rural life museum.

Iliffe maintained a brave face but, apart from his annual excavations in Cyprus, he had nothing but bad news and setbacks. In April 1951 Hugh Dalton, Minister of Local Government and Planning, refused the council’s application for war damage compensation for the museum. He claimed that Liverpool had had a fair share of capital for repairs to the Cathedral gardens, the Town Hall and the Walker Art Gallery. The decision was met with disappointment and resentment, led by Alderman Vere Egerton Cotton, who was taking a year off being chairman of the Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee to be the Lord Mayor.

“It’s a perfect scandal,” he declared, “that a City which has suffered as severely as Liverpool has suffered, and with collections of such natural,

scientific and archaeological value, should, for a few thousands of pounds, not be permitted to house and display them in the centre of the city.”<sup>57</sup>

As the Walker Art Gallery re-opened to the public, Iliffe and city architect Ronald Bradbury devised a minimum scheme to get the museum open. War-damage compensation of a mere £30,000 would, Iliffe declared, open the Lower Horseshoe gallery for displays.

By September the Minister of Local Government and Planning agreed to consider a modified scheme costing not more than £10,000. Ronald Bradbury complained that £10,000 was not enough, but by November had produced a new minimum scheme with an external staircase leading up to the Lower Horseshoe gallery, avoiding the need to rebuild the old entrance hall. A lift would be too expensive and so Bradbury proposed inserting a beam so that a block and tackle could be used for heavy exhibits.

As the museum's campaign to reopen hit this low ebb, Elaine Tankard joined the chorus of complaint about the lack of a museum building. One of her assistants Miss Broughton had assembled more than 2,000 pieces of pottery brought back from Cyprus by Iliffe on his second year's excavation. In 1952 Broughton told a local newspaper that she enjoyed the work, and Tankard broke her silence.

“Unfortunately” said Miss E. Tankard (Keeper of the Department of Archaeology), “much of it will remain in obscurity as far as people in Liverpool are concerned until we have a museum where they can be exhibited.”<sup>58</sup>

In 1952, while Iliffe was away in Cyprus and Elaine Tankard was acting director, she asked the Museums Association to help to get war-damaged provincial museums and art galleries rebuilt. The president cautiously replied that the council of the Museums Association would consider the matter sympathetically and decide how to get the best results.

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<sup>57</sup> 1951. ‘Embargo On City Museums “A Scandal”; Committee To Fight; Dalton’s Reasons. By Listener’. *Liverpool Echo*, 15 June. p.5

<sup>58</sup> 1952. ‘Ancient pottery forms her jig-saw puzzle. By A “Daily Post” Reporter’. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 September. p.7.

Several ministers were taken to see the devastated shell of the museum, but the council failed to get government agreement for even a £10,000 scheme to rebuild a small part of it.

In the summer of 1952, city architect Ronald Bradbury came up with a £5,000 scheme. A tenth of the size of Iliffe's original proposal of two years before, it did little more than create an entrance staircase and make the museum's Horseshoe galleries watertight. The tender for the work came in at £6,525, and after several months of waiting the Ministry of Housing and Local Government agreed that the council to spend the money.

Ronald Bradbury said, "This will give you a museum and nothing else. You cannot expect a Rolls Royce museum"<sup>59</sup>. Iliffe said, "After several years of disappointment and refusals, this achievement is encouraging, but it is not enough. One gallery will be better than nothing but it will not be a museum"<sup>60</sup>.

The campaign for more money went on with an exhibition *Antiquities without a Home* was shown at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester in 1952, and the Walker Art Gallery in 1953. The exhibition showed outstanding items from the museum's Joseph Mayer collection, and a selection of recent finds from Iliffe's excavations at Paphos in Cyprus. When the exhibition was shown at the Walker Art Gallery, Elaine Tankard added a room of Tibetan antiquities borrowed from a private gallery in London, alongside items from the museum collection.

Three pieces of Etruscan gold jewellery went missing near the end of the Manchester showing of *Antiquities without a Home*. In an unrelated incident at nearly the same time, a museum attendant Francis Grimsley admitted taking antique coins from the debris of the blitzed museum after he was found to have sold twenty seven antique coins to a Wallasey pawnbroker.

In April 1953 work started on Ronald Bradbury's new flight of steps from William Brown Street up to the Lower Horseshoe Gallery. Elaine Tankard told the *Daily Post*, "it will be based on the simplest lines, but it is beginning. We have been fighting for this for twelve years, and we believe that if we can get one gallery

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<sup>59</sup> 1952. '£6,525 for initial work on museum'. *Evening Express*, 12 December. p.3.

<sup>60</sup> 1953. *Annual Reports to the 103rd Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee*. p.29.

open public pressure will persuade the Minister to allow reconstruction of the entire museum”<sup>61</sup>.

By September the steps were almost finished, but Iliffe pointed out that it would take several months to fit the gallery with showcases and arrange for the first exhibition. The tender for the showcases had been delayed.

The museum staff continued their campaign to gain recognition for the museum's plight, challenging the experts on the television programme *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?* to identify exhibits from the museum. The programme's producer, David Attenborough, visited the museum to select the items for the show and it was broadcast on 15 April 1954.

Early in 1954 the Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee visited Carnatic Hall and the bombed museum on William Brown Street. It was more than twelve years since the museum was bombed and they were shocked by the deteriorating conditions. It was clear that collections stored at Carnatic Hall suffered from damp and dirt, and staff worked in nasty conditions. The ruins of the museum were just a place for local children to play. The committee asked for a report from the director Harry Iliffe and the city architect Ronald Bradbury.

Another year on and nothing had changed. In 1955, more than thirteen years since the museum was bombed and ten years after the Second World War had finished, the museum's collections were still stored in the damp rooms of Carnatic Hall. A reporter for the *Liverpool Daily Post* wrote that 'museum officials fight a constant battle against mildew, damp and dust...'

I went to Carnatic Hall and walked through room after overflowing room and sniffed the musty air. I saw ships in the drawing-room in full sail under crystal chandeliers. A thousand year old mummy lay stiff and bandaged in the hall. There were assegais in the attics and spears, tied up in bundles like giants' walking sticks, leaning against skin-covered war drums.

Wardrobes opened to reveal pegs crowded with fine eighteenth-century costumes and from the dark interiors of burst brown paper parcels the sheen of faded silk and the glitter of gold-tasselled robes coruscated in the dim light of a single electric bulb. Everywhere, swathed in cotton wool, bedded in straw and sawdust or packed in neatly labelled boxes, lay the

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<sup>61</sup> 1953. 'City Museum Repair Work Starts Today'. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 23 April. p.1.

nuclei of Liverpool's magnificent collections. Priceless objects of gold and silver were hidden in haphazard cardboard cartons which had once been dedicated to nothing more exciting than breakfast cereals.

In the course of my tour I saw ample evidence of the ravages of the all pervading damp and dust. The Okapi was splitting at his seams, corroding pins threatened the well-being of irreplaceable insects and, despite careful packing and enshrouding newspapers, the dust has dimmed the fur and plumage of many a mammal and bird...<sup>62</sup>

Life at Carnatic Hall did not improve, but at last there was activity at the museum. The building work that started in 1953 was finishing. The Lower Horseshoe was painted in pastel shades, with dove grey walls and white spotted mustard wallpaper. The doors were deep maroon; and the ceiling had sections of sky blue. Cases had arrived and staff bustled about filling them with specimens... though there was still no date for an opening.

A new recruit to the museum's campaign for a new building was Nancy Cunard, the rebellious great-granddaughter of Samuel Cunard, founder of the transatlantic shipping line. Cunard knew many of the 20th century's most distinguished artists and writers, including Wyndham Lewis, Aldous Huxley and Ezra Pound. She was photographed by Man Ray wearing an armful of African bracelets; and she produced the vast anthology *Negro* in 1934, which she put together with her sometime lover, the jazz pianist, Henry Crowder.

Nancy Cunard knew about the museum's African collections from a visit to Liverpool before the war, and now wanted to see them because she was writing a book on African ivories. When she learned that the museum was shut and that everything she wanted to see had been in temporary storage for years, she persuaded Henry Moore and Augustus John to write to the Lord Mayor of Liverpool and to the newspapers to complain<sup>63</sup>. Then, in May 1955, Nancy Cunard met Iliffe in France. The meeting led to a visit to Liverpool in January 1956 and dinner at Iliffe's home in Aigburth Drive, overlooking Liverpool's Sefton Park. On her way back to London, Cunard called at Manchester intending to lobby the acting editor of the *Guardian*, but she failed to see him. Over the following

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<sup>62</sup> Whittington-Egan, Richard, 1955. 'Threat Of Decay To Liverpool Treasures; They escaped German bombs – now the menace is mildew and dust.' *Liverpool Daily Post*. 17 June. p.6.

<sup>63</sup> Joannou, Maroula, 2004. 'Nancy Cunard's English Journey'. *Feminist Review*, vol.78, No.1, 2004, pp. 141-163 (Palgrave Macmillan), p.157.

weeks she sent a torrent of letters, beginning with one written on the train back to London and another from her bed in her London hotel. They left Iliffe in no doubt that Nancy Cunard was determined to support the museum and wanted him to arrange for the African ivories to be dug out of their store for her. She even offered to buy three of the more important pieces in the museum's collection, and sent five pounds to get ivories photographed so that postcards could be produced of them.

In the summer of 1956 a temporary assistant, David Boston, was appointed to sort out the ivories for Nancy Cunard to view. She visited Liverpool to see them in November of 1957 wearing 'an enormous Benin ivory armlet'<sup>64</sup>. In the meantime she travelled all over Europe visiting museums to look at ivories, and sending postcards and letters to Iliffe and Elaine Tankard almost everywhere that she went.

That summer Harry Iliffe went off as usual to Cyprus to continue his excavations at the Shrine of Aphrodite in Palea Paphos. It was the last of his trips. His health had been deteriorating since he was involved in a train crash in September 1951. He was on the London to Liverpool express that left the rails at Weedon, Northamptonshire, killing fourteen passengers and one member of dining car staff. Then in 1955 he suffered a cerebral thrombosis. At the same time Cyprus erupted into violence with a series of bomb attacks by EOKA, the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters. The British government of Cyprus had been uninterested in Greek Cypriot calls for *Enosis*, or union with Greece. The calls became more insistent, and explosions targeted government buildings in Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca. The situation in Cyprus and his increasingly poor health meant that Iliffe's 1955 expedition to Paphos was his last.

Over his six summer expeditions Harry Iliffe had acquired an extraordinary collection of about 650 Cypriot antiquities for the museum. As he ended his career as a field archaeologist in Cyprus, he prepared at last to open the museum that he had steered through years of closure.

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<sup>64</sup> Nancy Cunard's visit in 1957 was recalled by Keith Priestman in an e-mail to the author of 13 March 2010 - 'I was introduced to her by Elaine Tankard, and I recall that she was wearing an enormous Benin ivory armlet which had been part-burned to a dark brown in the sack of that city. If I had to choose a single adjective to describe her appearance, it would be 'extravagant'.



## Chapter 9 – 1955-1971 – Rebuilding.

The museum formally reopened on 26 January 1956 after 14½ years of closure. Harry Iliffe's increasing ill-health nearly prevented him from attending the opening, but his doctor at last gave permission for him to attend. As the Lord Mayor declared the gallery open, the lights came on in the display cases and the museum was relaunched.

Ronald Bradbury's temporary staircase led up the front of the building, and visitors saw only the Lower Horseshoe gallery, but they reacted quickly and enthusiastically. Nancy Cunard happened to be on one of her visits to the museum when it reopened and she scribbled a note to Harry Iliffe:-

Today, Saturday, 2 days after ceremonial opening and one day after public opening of "Lower Horseshoe" your attendant was counting the people as they came in: by 4p.m – (when I arrived) the number was 2,419 – By 5, when the Museum shut, 2,892. So well over 400 came in the last hour! A very good sale of booklets too.<sup>65</sup>

In fact a small part of the museum had opened temporarily some months before. Between 20 June and 12 July 1955, a small exhibition on the tea industry of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) went on show in the Lower Horseshoe gallery. The museum was not then ready to open but Iliffe had promised the Tea Bureau to put the exhibition on show in a small room next to the new entrance of the museum. The exhibition went ahead but as soon as it was over, the museum closed down again until the formal reopening.

Outside a painted board listed the contents as 'Natural History, Archaeology, Ethnology, Shipping'. Inside the first thing on view, in a glass case, was a large fragment of the bomb that set fire to the museum. Next to the bomb was a bearded mannequin wearing the clothes of Liverpool-born Charles Evans when he was deputy leader on the first ascent of Everest in 1953. Not far away was a display of the treasures that Iliffe had brought back from the Shrine of Aphrodite on Cyprus.

The old museum's thirty-nine smoke-blackened steps still led up to the entrance under the great portico, still with nothing behind it except ruins. The Museums

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<sup>65</sup> Cunard, Nancy, 1956. *Liverpool notes from NC. Jan 28 1956*- ms. one sheet – hand-written in pencil (National Museum of Liverpool).

Sub-committee had endorsed plans for new building several times, and was still waiting for a significant contribution from the War Damage Commission. Ronald Bradbury, the city architect planned a modern building behind the Victorian façade based, he said, on museums in Sweden, Denmark and Holland. It was to have six floors instead of the previous three. In spite of the extra space, at first his plans did not include an aquarium. Inevitably there was a public outcry when news that there was to be no aquarium leaked out. It was called a 'scandalous omission'. The pressure was hard to resist and, at the re-opening of the Lower Horseshoe, the chairman of the Museums Sub-committee announced plans for an aquarium and even a planetarium.

Iliffe described the display in the Lower Horseshoe as 'token exhibition'. 'This is not a museum', he said, 'but merely a shop window to remind the world of what the Museums have and could provide, given a modicum of effective interest and support'<sup>66</sup>. The chairman of the Museums Sub-committee announced to a meeting of the North Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries that the lack of a museum was 'a blot on the city's cultural life and reputation'<sup>67</sup>. In May 1957 the celebrity archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler viewed the ruins of the old museum and pronounced them 'shocking'<sup>68</sup>.

Elaine Tankard gave a talk to the Liverpool Soroptomist Club complaining that the museum staff had to work in filthy conditions. She warned that the museum's collections would be homeless in a couple of years when the lease would be up on Carnatic Hall and the University took it over to convert the site for student accommodation.

In the summer of 1957, Iliffe and Tankard looked on as the Queen Mother laid the foundation stone of a new central library building behind the library part of the façade. They started planning work on the Upper Horseshoe, to provide museum workshops and storerooms at a cost of £60,917, including £54,000 from the War Damage Commission.

With the Upper Horseshoe destined for behind-the-scenes activity and the main museum building remaining a gloomy ruin, the only bit of the museum that was open to the public was still the Lower Horseshoe gallery. The Government

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<sup>66</sup> 1956. *Annual Reports to the 106th Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee*, p.33.

<sup>67</sup> 1956. 'The Blot On Liverpool's Life and Reputation'. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 29 September. p.7.

<sup>68</sup> Eglin, George, 1957. 'Liverpool's Priceless Relics Rot In Storage; But there are still no plans for a museum to house them.'. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 1 May. p.4.

resolutely refused to sanction extra money from the War Damage Commission or to allow Liverpool City Council to borrow the money to rebuild the main museum. The council's determination was hardening year by year. The Leader of the Council, Alderman John Braddock, announced that he intended to proceed with the building of the museum and the setting up of a new maritime museum, in defiance of Government's rebuttals.

But nothing happened and the old museum building remained a ruin.

In the meantime the collections were growing apace.

In 1958 the King's Regiment (Liverpool) transferred its treasured collections to Liverpool City Council. When the Kingsmen were amalgamated with the Manchester Regiment, their barracks in Formby closed and with it their regimental museum. The collections dated back to the American Campaigns of the 1760s.

The shipping collection had grown and had its own curator, E.W. Paget-Tomlinson. He reported that, in spite of losing 100 ship models in the May 1941 blitz, the collection numbered over 400 models and about 100 oil paintings. The Liverpool company Littlewoods had offered the museums a rent-free building in Hemans Street, Bootle, north of Liverpool, and most of the ship models were stored there. Littlewoods also helped to organise a shipping exhibition as part of the celebrations for the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King John's Liverpool charter in 1957. The exhibition was held in Littlewoods Central Clubrooms, Dale Street, Liverpool, for two weeks in June and attracted 56,000 people.

A month before the exhibition, one of the museum's ship models was sent to star in a Pinewood Studios film about the Titanic disaster. The 19 metre long model was made by Harland and Wolf, Belfast, and at various times it has represented the *Olympic*, the *Britannic* and the *Titanic*. The film, *A Night to Remember*, was released in 1958 and won a Golden Globe Award for 'Best Foreign Film' in 1959.

In 1959 Elaine Tankard and her assistant David Boston brought film and sound to the museum's displays for the first time. They set up a film of Inuit artefacts alongside two cases displaying mannequins of an Inuit family. They also partitioned-off an area where school parties could watch films, with commentaries on tape recorders donated by local supporters. Tankard and Boston went on to install film and sound into a Civic Exhibition held at the

Walker Art Gallery in 1960, and a year later Boston left to work at the British Museum.

Harry Iliffe, having suffered ill health for several years and disappointed that he had not seen more than one gallery of the museum open, handed over management of the museum to Elaine Tankard at the end of 1958 and resigned his post from 31 March 1959. For ten years he had planned the reconstruction of the museum, but had achieved far less than he had hoped.

Tankard was Keeper-in-charge of the Museums for about a year, and then Thomas (Tom) Andrew Hume started as director. He came from north-east England, and had been navigator on bombers in the Second World War. After the war he worked at Kirkstall Abbey, Leeds, and at Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury, before moving to Liverpool on 1 January 1960.

In March 1960 the rebuilt Library opened. In September Tom Hume and the council's architect Ronald Bradbury announced new plans for the rebuilding of the museum. The new scheme was for a steel-framed building with five floors, one less than Bradbury's 1955 proposals. The cost was estimated at £500,000, but the scheme was split into two phases. The first phase was an L-shaped linking the old façade to the restored Horseshoe galleries at an estimated cost of £250,000. The second phase was for new galleries built on the footprint of the old museum. Of especial interest to the Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee were the proposals for the aquarium, which, members noted, was one of the most popular features of the museum in pre-war days.

Within weeks the Minister of Housing and Local Government said that he would consider loan sanction for the project when a list of tenders has been submitted to him. Tysons (Contractors) Ltd. submitted a tender for £280,340 for the first phase of the rebuilding and the city's Finance Committee agreed that rebuilding could start, but only on condition that no money was spent before 1 April 1961.

Tom Hume was furious at the delay. He said, "Our valuable relics, and indeed the staff, are in museum 3-D condition – darkness, dust and damp"<sup>69</sup>. He claimed that the decision to defer a start on the rebuilding the museums by six months could be disastrous for the collections. He cited especially the recently acquired Ince Blundell marbles, a really exceptional collection of ancient and 18<sup>th</sup> century sculpture, which were stored in the cavernous basements of St. George's Hall,

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<sup>69</sup> 1961. 'The 3-D threat in city museums, by Our Municipal Correspondent'. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 14 October. p.7.

over the road from the museum. Tom Hume's dismay was understandable, but misplaced. Within a year of starting work in Liverpool he had seen obstacles removed which had frustrated others for years.

A year after he had started as director, Hume created a new department of conservation, the first in a regional museum. The new Keeper of Conservation, Keith Priestman, set up a Centre for Archaeology for the new North West Museum and Art Gallery Service, which meant his staff would also be available to museums outside Liverpool.

Two years after Hume started as director, live exhibits returned to the museum when bees were installed, and the museum's first schools museum officer, D.E. Hogan, was appointed to work on group visits by schools and colleges.

In April 1962 work finally began on phase one of rebuilding the museum...

...and the Leader of the Council, Alderman John Braddock, backed plans for a maritime museum. He allocated to the Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee, a site for the new museum near Liverpool's Pier Head.

Even the damp and dark Carnatic Hall took on a more optimistic atmosphere as staff prepared exhibits for phase one of the rebuilt museum with a new sense of purpose.

In April 1963 the Earl of Derby unveiled a plaque to commemorate the start of the rebuilding of the museum and took a guided tour, as a young volunteer recalled many years later.

When he and his entourage came into the zoology department, I was in the process of skinning a rook. I looked up and smiled as they crowded round me and asked me some questions. I responded as best I could but I was a bit overcome and my words came out with difficulty. Some photographers were also there and took pictures for the local newspapers. After I saw the photographs in the papers a few days later, I found that Lord Derby had been accompanied by Alderman D.J. Lewis, The Lord Mayor of Liverpool; Mr. Hume, the director of the museum; and someone known as Alderman J. Maxwell Entwistle. It had been an exciting experience<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> Gilbert, Susanna, 2009. *Memoirs*, typescript. Chapter 8, 'Southport – The Museum, The Zoo and The Field'. Sent to World Museum by Susanna Gilbert (née Davey, in 2009.

Ronald Bradbury's L-shaped phase one of the rebuilt museum would link the old museum façade with the surviving Horseshoe galleries. It would contain an aquarium and a lecture theatre, as well as some galleries, laboratories and offices. Staff worked enthusiastically on designs and scale models of galleries for the new building. The four new galleries would be *Liverpool - A changing city*, *Earth before man*, *The history of the ship*, and a more general gallery of treasures from the collections. Tom Hume had a clear and ambitious vision of what the museum should be able to do:-

Provision of comprehensive source material illustrating the development of the earth; growth of all life on it, and civilisations and crafts, and work of man; has been recognised as a main duty of Liverpool's museum<sup>71</sup>.

As work progressed on the rebuilding of the museum, the lease was up on Carnatic Hall, and staff had to move the collections out. It took some months to shift them to temporary warehouse accommodation.

On 2 February 1966 Elaine Tankard retired and her assistant Dorothy M. Slow took over as Keeper of Archaeology. Tankard had worked at the museum for more than 35 years, and had acted as director several times, but she slipped away quietly only weeks before the old museum at last began to reopen. She had reputedly fallen out with museum director Tom Hume.

On 25 March 1966 Prime Minister Harold Wilson took an hour off his election campaigning to open the first phase of the rebuilt museum.

The public reacted enthusiastically and attendance for the following year was double that of previous years. Tom Hume claimed to 'have the highest provincial museum attendance figures'<sup>72</sup>. The only complaint, and one that persists today, came from architecture specialists who complained that Ronald Bradbury's top floor projected beyond the top of the 1860 building and spoiled the skyline of the historic William Brown Street façade.

Tom Hume announced plans for the next phase of building. Work had already started on site and he highlighted transport and astronomy galleries, and a planetarium.

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<sup>71</sup> 1965. *Liverpool annual report of the museums*, p.5.

<sup>72</sup> 1967. *Liverpool Echo*, 21 February.

The museum's education programmes reached a peak after phase one was opened. School visits increased in one year by a third to 13,600, and education staff started film sessions and quizzes for school holidays. But in April 1967 a fire broke out in the Technical College damaging displays in the Lower Horseshoe gallery and requiring the education and conservation staff to move from their offices. The education staff who had offices in the Technical College were relocated to a temporary office constructed on the Lower Horseshoe which had been closed for repair.

In 1968 the repaired Lower Horseshoe gallery reopened with natural history displays and an exhibition gallery. The first exhibition *Life in the Sand Dunes*, focused on the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve, Southport, a rare habitat just to the north of Liverpool.

Vending machines with drinks and snacks were installed in the basement, while a typical shopping trip for aquarium food was listed as – 'A dozen oxhearts, twenty pounds of squid and fifteen lettuce and a liberal supply of maggots and meal worms'<sup>73</sup>.

In 1969, the museum was taken over by a new Arts and Recreation Committee replacing the long-standing Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee. Shortly afterwards, following a report on the city's organisation by management consultants McKinsey & Company, the museum was transferred temporarily to the council's General Purposes Committee, and then to an Arts and Culture Committee. As the museums shifted between committees, the newly appointed deputy director Neil Cossons brought in new procedures for staff, and the museum took over the maintenance of the whole of the building, though it was still partly occupied by the College of Technology. At last the museum could sort out the damage from the 1967 fire and get the education and conservation staff back into their offices and workshops.

In 1970 the College of Technology was amalgamated with other colleges to form Liverpool Polytechnic, but still, though the maintenance of the building was carried out by the museums, most of the office and behind-the-scenes accommodation continued to be used by the new Liverpool Polytechnic.

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<sup>73</sup> Sizer, C and Murphy, D, 1968. 'Sea-horses from Singapore'. *Liverpool 68*, City of Liverpool Public Relations Office, pp.1-3.

The rebuilding was finally completed and the museum was handed over by the contractors. The ruins left by the 1941 blitz had finally been cleared and the new museum building behind the façade of 1860 was finished.

The next job was to fill it with displays. The director, Tom Hume, was eager to create a comprehensive modern museum. He was keen that the museum should tackle modern science and technology and he set up a new Astronomy Department early in 1969. Staff worked on new galleries of land transport, time and space, and on a planetarium.

The rebuilt museum was launched in January 1970 with a display of moon rock brought back by the Apollo 11 crew. More than 32,000 people saw the rock during its three-day showing. At times a queue stretched hundreds of metres outside the museum.

The head of the museum's new Astronomy Department, Pat Sudbury, managed the new planetarium. After some initial difficulties with the £5,000 Zeiss projector, he put on experimental shows to invited parties of children and adults from March 1970. The planetarium finally opened to the public on 22 May; shows for schools began nine years later in 1979. The *Planetarium* seated 67, and was, Sudbury claimed, the first English public planetarium outside London<sup>74</sup>.

Sudbury began collections of astronomy and science, particularly space rocketry and telescopes, and created the new *Space* gallery next to the Planetarium. Over the next few years he investigated oceanography, modern physics, photography, scientific instruments and medicine, some of which grew into significant collections.

The revived museum was the major attraction for the Museums Association Annual conference to Liverpool in 1970.

While the café in the Walker Art Gallery was being repainted, the operation transferred to the museum for a two-month experiment. It did not work well and plans for permanent catering in the museum were shelved.

In July 1971 a *Port of Liverpool Gallery* opened on the ground floor of the rebuilt museum. Other successes of the year were the temporary exhibitions. Two of them, *Apollo 10* and *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, were exceptionally popular and took the number of visits to an unprecedented 647,767 in the year. The complete

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<sup>74</sup> Armagh Planetarium opened on 1 May 1968.



list of the year's exhibitions was *Computer Art*, *German Theatre*, *Apollo 10*, *Wave Motion*, *Carbon Fibres*, *Atomic Energy* and *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*.

Apollo 10, the spacecraft from the fourth manned mission in the Apollo programme and the second to orbit the moon, was brought to Liverpool for a *Space Feature* in the Liverpool Show, an annual summer event on Wavertree Playground (locally known as the Mystery) in south Liverpool. After three days at the Liverpool Show the Apollo 10 capsule was exhibited at the museum.

The BBC exhibition *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* followed the broadcast of the wildly successful six-part historical drama, and was shown for three months in the museum.

In 1971 Neil Cossons resigned as deputy to become director of Ironbridge Gorge Museum. Then, after twelve years as director, Tom Hume was approached to become the first director of the new Museum of London. He took the job and worked there until a year after it opened in 1976.

In Liverpool, in the absence of both director and deputy director, the energetic Patrick Sudbury was made 'acting director' of the museum until a new appointment. Geoffrey D. Lewis arrived from Sheffield to start as the new director of Liverpool's museums on 1 August 1972.

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## Chapter 10 – 1972-1993 - Expanding

Ted Heath's government planned a new tier of local government, 'metropolitan county councils', around larger cities of England. On Merseyside a new county council would take over some powers from district councils. The running of museums could either go to the new county council or stay with the district councils. The Merseyside councils, including Liverpool City Council, came up with a mixed arrangement with the museum and the Walker Art Gallery forming the nucleus of a new county service, and district councils retaining the option to run their own museums and galleries if they wished.

On 1 April 1974 the new Merseyside County Council went live. The museum and the Walker Art Gallery were transferred from the City Council. Both directors reported to the new County Council Arts and Culture Committee, but the museum and the gallery continued to be run separately. The director of the Walker Art Gallery, Timothy Stevens, was responsible for the Walker Art Gallery and Sudley House. Geoff Lewis, director of Merseyside County Museums, was responsible for the museum, Speke Hall and Croxteth Hall and Park. The change from the City Council to the County Council gave Geoff Lewis the chance to review the museum staffing structure, a job that uncertainty over the future had deferred since his appointment nearly two years earlier.

The new governing committee quickly gave the museum a new name - *Merseyside County Museum* - but their attention focused more on new museum sites. Attempts to plan a new maritime museum continued in the background, but of immediate concern were two historic houses on the outskirts of Liverpool, Croxteth Hall to the north-east and Speke Hall to the south.

Croxteth Hall, together with 500 acres of farm, woods and parkland had come to the city from the estate of the last Earl of Sefton in 1972. The estate presented museums with new challenges of land management and Lewis responded with a strategy emphasising environmental conservation. He stored larger museum exhibits, especially rocketry and land transport, in the more secure farm buildings. The Hall itself was unfurnished and there were problems with making it ready for the public. In any case, the Arts and Culture Committee found that they could not afford to open it. On 21 January 1975, they debated, and turned down, a motion that the museums should sell stored collections to provide the money to open Croxteth Park. Eventually the hall and its walled garden were opened for summer seasons, and Lewis was authorised to sell crops produced there to help cover the costs.

The City Council had taken on the lease of Speke Hall, an extraordinarily fine 16<sup>th</sup> century house, from the National Trust towards the end of the Second World War. Responsibility for Speke was given to the director of museums in 1970 and so, when the County Council took over the museums, it took over Speke as well. The lease gave the County Council full responsibility for repairs, and a structural survey led to a five-year, government subsidised restoration programme costing over a million pounds.

The Walker Art Gallery was also expanding. The trustees of the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight approached the County Council to take over their gallery. The gallery is the centrepiece of the picturesque garden village built by William Hesketh Lever, Lord Leverhulme, alongside his soap factory. He built the gallery to house his spectacular and wide-ranging collection and dedicated it to the memory of his wife, Elizabeth. It had run as a trust since it opened in 1922, but on 30 June 1978 Merseyside County Council took over as sole trustee of the Lady Lever Art Gallery and it became the responsibility of the Walker Art Gallery.

Back at the museum the key priority was to complete the displays in the rebuilt museum. Slowly new galleries opened up. The *Port of Liverpool* gallery opened in July 1971, and natural history galleries opened in 1973. A new aquarium and a land transport gallery went into the basement. An antiquities and ethnology gallery completed the main display floors of the museum in 1976, thirty five years after the museum had been bombed.

Meanwhile, in 1973, education staff got back into the suite of rooms in the old Technical College that had been damaged in the fire of 1967, and their work expanded with thousands of schoolchildren visiting the museum in groups.

On 31 December 1977, after a little over five years in Liverpool, Geoff Lewis resigned to become director of the Museum Studies Department, University of Leicester. Richard A. Foster, the director of Oxfordshire County Museum Service, took up the post of director of Merseyside County Museums.

Foster, aware that the new Merseyside County Museums needed to serve districts outside Liverpool as well as the city, continued the increase the number of museums. He agreed with Knowsley Borough Council to set up a museum at Prescott, to the east of Liverpool. Prescott had been an important centre for craft workshops producing parts for clocks and watches until factory-produced watches from the USA and elsewhere in Britain put them out of business. Foster agreed

that the museum's important horological collections would be housed in the new museum in Prescott, and that the County Council would make an annual grant to Knowsley Council. The County Council helped Knowsley to acquire a former National Westminster bank and fit out a display from the horology collection on the first floor. It opened as Prescott Museum in 1982<sup>75</sup>.

Richard Foster's most significant expansion of the museums was in the central docks of Liverpool. Since the early eighteenth century the docks had been central to Liverpool's trading wealth, but by the 1970s they were abandoned and their warehouses were derelict. This legacy of architecture and engineering stretched along several miles of the Mersey and needed new uses.

In 1973 Building Design Partnership had carried out feasibility study on the use of the Albert Dock warehouses to house the dispersed parts of the Liverpool Polytechnic, and a wing of the dock buildings was earmarked to be a maritime museum. The scheme would have brought a double benefit to the museums: it would remove the Polytechnic from the museum building on William Brown Street, and provide a waterfront site for the maritime collections. It was presented to the city council, but floundered through lack of political will.

In 1974 the new County Council's Arts and Culture Committee had set up a Maritime Museum Advisory Committee. But it had made no real progress on reclaiming the Albert Dock.

At the end of the seventies, Richard Foster appointed Martyn Heighton as project manager and then assistant director, to work with him to create the maritime museum that had been dreamed of for the last 40 odd years. On 18 July 1980, Foster and Heighton took the first step towards their goal, opening stage one of the Merseyside Maritime Museum in the Pilotage Building and Boat Hall, just north of the Albert Dock. Charges of 60p for entry were meant to help cover the cost of the new museum. Closing at the end of a successful season, the museum reopened permanently the following year.

Soon after Margaret Thatcher's government had come to power in 1979, Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, announced new *urban development councils* for Liverpool and for London. In 1981 he set up the Merseyside Development Corporation to regenerate the docks of Liverpool,

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<sup>75</sup> The arrangement between the museums and Knowsley Council came to an end in 2008, though Prescott Museum remained open with its display of clocks and watches, many of them on loan from National Museums Liverpool.

Bootle, Wallasey and Birkenhead. In the same year tensions in Liverpool erupted in Toxteth, when a heavy-handed arrest turned into full-scale rioting over nine days. Heseltine focused on Liverpool in response to political and social turmoil in the city.

Foster and Heighton secured support for stage two of their plan - a new maritime museum occupying *Block D*, the whole of the north side of Albert Dock. The proposal proved to be an important catalyst for the revitalisation of the Albert Dock, and Foster managed to secure significant buildings and two dry docks for the museums. In addition to the Pilotage Building and Boat Hall, he acquired the historic Canning Graving Docks, the Cooperage, and the Piermaster's House, all prominent properties in the key central dock area.

Though the building was still being renovated, the expanded Merseyside Maritime Museum was hurried into Block D, in time for the visit of the Tall Ships Race to Liverpool in 1984. Full sized ships were acquired for display in museum's dry docks - the 700 ton Liverpool Pilot Cutter *Edmund Gardner* and the schooner *De Wadden*.

In April 1979 the locomotive *Lion*, a prime exhibit in the museum's transport gallery, was sent to Ruston Diesels Ltd. for restoration. It came back into service as the oldest working locomotive in the world. *Lion* led the procession at the re-enactment of the Rainhill Trials in 1980 to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, and for several years worked on various preserved railways.

In 1979, the museum had its first visitor-operated computer game – one of the earliest to appear in a museum. A Commodore PET (Personal Electronic Transactor) computer was set up with an animal identification game in an evolution exhibit<sup>76</sup>. Also in 1979, the museum put a Mobile Exhibition Service on the road. Developed with government funding, it consisted of a Landrover and an exhibition in a caravan on retractable wheels which was taken to the schools of the inner city. There, museum education staff ran sessions in the exhibition and classroom. The first show was entitled *Treasures of the Museums* and was followed by many more until the service was retired in 1991.

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<sup>76</sup> Foster, Richard & Phillips, Philip, 1988. 'New applications for computers in the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside' - chapter 18 in Roberts, D.A., ed. *Collections management for museums*. p.127.

In 1983 a Government White Paper *Streamlining the Cities* proposed the abolition of Metropolitan Counties. The proposal heralded the end of the end of Merseyside County Museums, and raised a question about whether the museums and galleries would stay together in a unified service, or be split up among the district councils.

Richard Foster argued that the last ten years had demonstrated the benefits of 'a tightly-integrated service with the resources of the County Museum being made available to all outlets in the economic provision of management, conservation, design and educational services'<sup>77</sup>.

The main concern was the future of the Walker Art Gallery. A case was made that its collection should be a national responsibility because of its pre-eminent quality. An early proposal gave responsibility for the Walker to the Trustees of the Tate Gallery, making it an offshoot of the Tate Gallery, London. But Lord Gowrie, the Minister for the Arts, said on a visit to Liverpool that he would consider a board of trustees independent of the Tate and representing local interests.

County councillors were also concerned about the other art galleries. As well as worrying that Militant city councillors might sell the Walker's art collections, they thought that the district councils would fail to keep up the Lady Lever Art Gallery and Sudley House. Discussion focused on the art galleries and there was less concern for the museums and their collections. The arguments went on for two years and then the Greater London Council, and the metropolitan county counties, including Merseyside, were abolished in 1986.

In the interim, in spite of the uncertainty, Foster continued to expand the museums service. In 1984 he bought the Lancashire County Sessions House, a porticoed Victorian building next to the Walker Art Gallery, for £55,000. With the active encouragement of Merseyside County Councillors, he established a Museum of Labour History there. It was devised and developed by Loraine Knowles, formerly head of the Prescott Museum, and it opened on 25 March 1986<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> *Merseyside County Council Proceedings of the Council and Committees, 1983-1984 part 2* (M352 MIN 2/1/13) – Arts and Culture Committee (special meeting), 16 November 1983, Joint Report of Director of Art Galleries and, Director of Museums, Director of Development and Planning, County Solicitor and Secretary and County Treasurer, 3B enclosure 3, pp.1-10.

<sup>78</sup> The Museum of Labour History was open in the County Sessions House on William Brown Street until November 1991, when it was closed to make way for the planned Museum of Liverpool Life on the waterfront.

Foster also opened up the museums' collection of 'large objects' stored in two sheds, the former Irish ferry terminal on Princes Dock just north of Liverpool's Pierhead. The stores were opened experimentally on Sunday afternoons during the summer of 1985, and attracted 13,000 visitors in 15 days. The *Large Objects Store* was formally opened in April 1986 and showed roughly-displayed rockets, telescopes, vehicles such as the Mersey Tunnel scrubber and the Liverpool Lord Mayor's coach, equipment and machinery from local industries and craft workshops, and salvaged bits from buildings.

For the next season, beginning in April 1986, a major attraction at the Large Objects Store was the hands-on centre, *Technology Testbed*, the brainchild of Pat Sudbury, assistant director of museums, Adrian Jarvis, Keeper of Transport, and Education Officer, Paul Rees. Inspired by the new interactive science centre movement in Canada and the USA – as reported on by Julian Ravest, Keeper of Physical Sciences after his visit there in the early 1980s – *Technology Testbed* featured educational and entertaining home-made mechanical interactive exhibits. In the 1987 season the Large Object Store attracted 60,000 people between April and September, many of whom visited in school parties. However, in 1989 the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company sold the Prince's Dock sheds that housed the Large Object Store. The experiment was short-lived, inventive and ramshackle, and is still remembered in Liverpool thirty years after it closed.

Alongside Foster's more visible activity in the last years of the county council, he was engaged in a behind-the-scenes campaign to achieve not just a government grant for the museums, but full status as national museums and galleries. He found himself at the centre of an intensive period of lobbying, especially of Lord Gowrie, the Minister for the Arts, during the two critical years between 1983 and 1985. Gowrie was convinced that, given the outstanding quality of the collections in the Merseyside museums and galleries, they should be given national status, but he resigned as Minister for the Arts in 1985, because, he said, he could not live in London on the £33,000 salary for the job. His successor, Richard Luce, announced in Parliament on 13 February 1986 that the Queen had approved the *Merseyside Museums and Galleries Order 1986*. The order created a new national trustee body bringing the museums on Merseyside into the august club of national museums that included the National Gallery, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside were, and still are, the only English national museum based outside London. A new Board of Trustees was set up and included Sir Leslie Young, former chairman of the Merseyside

Development Corporation, and two former county councillors Benjamin Shaw and John Last.

Veteran Labour councillor Ben Shaw was chairman of Merseyside County Council in 1984, the year of the opening of the Maritime Museum on the Albert Dock, and the year when the Tall Ships Race and the International Garden Festival were in Liverpool. He was also the founding chairman of the Friends of Merseyside Museums and Galleries.

John Last, more than thirty years younger than Shaw, was a Conservative and took over as chairman of Merseyside County Council Arts and Culture Committee when the Tories swept to power in 1978. He was a Littlewoods executive whose work on arts and culture was supported by his boss, the great patron of the arts Sir John Moores. Last's membership of the board of the Museums and Galleries Commission and particularly his contact with the Conservative Government were undoubtedly important factors in winning Merseyside national status for its museums and galleries.

Richard Foster was now director of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. For the first time in their long history the Walker Art Gallery and the museum were under one managing director. Timothy Stevens, director of the Walker became Foster's deputy. He left in August 1987 to be Keeper of Art at the National Museums of Wales.

Speke Hall and Croxteth Hall were separated from the museums, the lease on Speke reverting to the National Trust, and Croxteth to be run by the City Council.

The museum, renamed Merseyside County Museum in 1974, was renamed again now that Merseyside County Council had gone. Richard Foster suggested Liverpool Museum or William Brown Street Museum. The new trustees chose Liverpool Museum, on the grounds that people called it that anyway.

An early and difficult job for Foster was a reorganisation of the staff for the new National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. The museum and the art galleries had operated entirely separately. The two staffing structures needed to be integrated and simplified. Foster drafted in civil servants from London to help him. The Office of Arts and Libraries set up an Establishment Review Committee which was briefed to recommend how many posts were necessary for the new organisation. They delivered their report in January 1987 saying that out of a total



of 557 permanent and seasonal posts, only 392 posts were necessary. The report's recommendations proved unpalatable and there followed two years of negotiations before staff were transferred from local government to civil service pay and conditions on 1 April 1989.

Foster began planning to expand the museum. He approached Liverpool Polytechnic and he asked if they would hand over the three floors they occupied under the Horseshoe galleries. He was rebuffed but nevertheless commissioned architects Brock, Carmichael & Associates, Liverpool, to carry out a feasibility study looking at options to expand the museum.

An exhibition *What's in Store* piloted the showing of stored collections in large numbers, and led to a hands-on area in the museum, at first for an experimental five weeks during the summer holidays of 1987. The Natural History Centre had 10,000 specimens available for inspection in drawers, and demonstrators to assist visitors. It attracted 20,268 visits and led to a permanent centre that was opened in July 1989 by Tony Soper, naturalist, film-maker and co-founder of the BBC's Natural History Unit. The Natural History Centre rapidly started collecting awards including National Heritage's Museum of the Year Award for the best Educational Initiative, and the Shell/Times Museum Professional of the Year award for Curator of Palaeontology Phil Phillips. Its example inspired similar centres from Canada to the Netherlands.

Computerisation of collection records was then new to museums but staff at the museum were early adopters. By 1988 they had computerised a remarkable 70,000 records of items in the geology collections. They had 37 computers for collection documentation and word processing, 'with a further dozen or so used for other tasks'<sup>79</sup>.

In 1988 Foster announced his plans for a new staff structure to come into effect on 1 April 1989. The new staff structure would be in four new divisions and each with a 'designate' head. He appointed Eric Greenwood as Keeper of the museum; Julian Treuherz as Keeper of Art Galleries; Mike Stammers as Keeper of the Maritime Museum; and Jim France as Keeper of Conservation.

Foster was also working on big plans for his museums. His most ambitious plan was for the enlargement and improvement of the museum, but he also needed a

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<sup>79</sup> Foster, Richard & Phillips, Philip, 1988. 'New applications for computers in the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside' - chapter 18 in Roberts, D.A., ed. *Collections management for museums*. pp.127 & 128.

new store to house reserve collections displaced by new galleries at the museum and from the Large Object Collection when the lease ran out and it closed in October 1989. His most contentious plan was for a new Museum of Liverpool Life to replace the Museum of Labour History.

The Museum of Liverpool Life was to go in two of the museums' historic buildings near Albert Dock – the Pilotage Building and the adjacent Boat Hall. The proposed closure met with resistance. The first objection was that the new museum was to have an admission charge whereas the current Museum of Labour History had none and was therefore open to a wider audience. Foster responded by announcing concessionary entry to the Merseyside Maritime Museum and a series of consultative meetings. The Museum of Labour History was to close on Sunday 3 November 1991, with the concessionary admission scheme at the Maritime Museum coming into operation on Monday 4 November 1991.

But the campaign against closure of the Labour History Museum would not go away. The trustees of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside were cast in the role of outsiders destroying Liverpool's heritage. Liverpool council's Libraries and Arts Committee expressed concern about the planned closure. A motion criticising the trustees was heard in full council and local Labour MPs tabled an early day motion in the House of Commons on 7 November. The Transport and General Workers Union and the Merseyside Unemployed Resources Centre suggested that the museums' board should have a 'North-West trustee with more direct experience of working class life and attitudes.'<sup>80</sup>

The commotion threatened the delicate balance that Foster had to maintain between the national status of his museums and their role as Liverpool's museums. He promised that the new museum would not lose its emphasis on working class and trade union history, and set up an advisory group to discuss its contents. It was chaired by Curator of Regional History, Loraine Knowles, and drew representatives from Merseyside Trade Union Community & Unemployed Resource Centre; the North West Labour History Society; Liverpool Trades Council; Second Chance To Learn; Liverpool Polytechnic; the King's Regiment; and the University of Liverpool's departments of history, sociology, economic history and continuing education. The closure of the Museum of Labour History went ahead and the Lord Mayor of Liverpool opened phase one of the new

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<sup>80</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1991*, pp. 283-285, 'Liverpool Life (86/91)' Board of Trustees 26 November 1991, p.283, para.12.

Museum of Liverpool Life on 1 May 1993. 750 square metres of displays in the former Boat Hall were divided into *Making a Living*, *Demanding a Voice* and *Mersey Culture*.

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## Chapter 11 – 1990-1997 - More experiments and expansion

For decades museum authorities were untroubled by the human remains in their collections, though many held a quantity of Egyptian mummies, artefacts made with human bone and hair, and material formerly used for medical study. The museum's collections contained over a thousand such items<sup>81</sup>. In 1989 the World Archaeological Congress signalled a change in attitudes in their *Vermillion Accord on Human Remains*. It demanded more respect for human remains, and for the views that different groups held about their dead. The Accord was duly reported to the trustees of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside in September 1990. A further report in June 1991 listed human remains in the collections and proposed guidelines for the 'Storage, Display, Interpretation and Return of Human Remains in Ethnographical Collections'<sup>82</sup>. The matter came into sharp focus in 1993 when the grotesque tale of a human head came to light.

A post-graduate student from the University of Southampton, Cressida Fforde, visited the museum on her search for the remains of Yagan a Noongar warrior from Western Australia who is considered a hero for his resistance to white settlers and was shot dead by a settler in 1833. Fforde identified a human head of Australian Aboriginal origin in the museum's ethnology collections as that of Yagan. The head had entered the museum's collection in 1894 from the Liverpool Royal Institution, which acquired it in 1835 by gift from a Royal Navy Lieutenant Dale. It had been formally removed from the museum's collection in 1964 because it had deteriorated badly, and it was buried in Everton Cemetery along with some other human remains from the collections.

When Yagan's head was buried, responsibility for it had passed to Liverpool City Council, the managers of the cemetery. As a result of Fforde's research, the Australian government asked for its return and the City Council asked the Home Office for a licence to exhume the head of Yagan from Everton Cemetery. The Home Office refused the request. In May 1997 Ken Colbung, representing the Noongah elders in Western Australia, visited the UK to try to reopen the case.

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<sup>81</sup> Surveys have shown that National Museums Liverpool collections have about 1,240 items identified as human remains. These include twenty complete Ancient Egyptian mummies; skulls, bone fragments and other skeletal material; 864 slides of human tissue, and nearly 100 artefacts which incorporate human remains such as bone and teeth.

<sup>82</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1991*, pp.171-178, 'Human Remains (51/91)' Board of Trustees 18 June 1991, appendix 14.

He visited Liverpool and museum director Richard Foster was persuaded to intervene.

It turned out that another burial had been made on top of Yagan's. A plan was made to sink a shaft next to the coffins and remove the casket with the remains sideways, without disturbing burials above. Richard Foster put up about £1,300 to bring in geophysical experts from University College London to do a survey on 11 June 1997. He sent their report to the Home Office, a licence was granted, and the exhumation went ahead on 14 August. At a handover ceremony at Liverpool Town Hall on Sunday 31 August, the City Council handed Yagan's head in an inscribed wooden box to a representative of the Australian High Commission. The High Commission passed the head to Aboriginal elders for return to Western Australia.

Ironically the legislation under which national museums were set up would not have allowed the return of Yagan's head if it had still been in the museums' collection when the return was requested<sup>83</sup>. It was only the fact that the head had already been de-accessioned because it was deteriorating that allowed the return to go ahead. This anomaly was only removed by the Human Tissues Act 2004 which was primarily designed to regulate the removal and holding of human tissue within the National Health Service following the scandal at Alder Hey Hospital in West Derby, Liverpool. Section 47 of the act gave national museums the power to remove human remains from their collections, and led to the return of human remains to New Zealand and Australia<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Article 6 of the *Merseyside Museums and Galleries Order 1986* allows de-accessioning only in the following circumstances:

- A duplicate object or work.
- An object that in the Trustees' opinion is unsuitable for retention in the collections and can be disposed of without detriment to the interests of students or members of the public.
- An exchange with another institution as scheduled in the Museums and Galleries Act 1992.
- An object or work that has become useless by reason of damage, physical deterioration or infestation.

<sup>84</sup> The Human Tissues Act became law in November 2004, but the specific section referring to museum de-accessioning had to wait until 2006 for a 'Commencement Order'. The trustees then agreed that to the de-accessioning of three tattooed heads *toi moko*, the skeletal remains of another *toi moko* and a cranium identified as *Moriori* from the Chatham Islands, and they were handed over in November 2007. The Australian government submitted a request for the return of three items in January 2006, and they were agreed by trustees on 11 September 2007. Two representatives of the *Ngarrindjeri*, a group of clans from South Australia, visited the museum on 13 May 2009 and collected the first of them.

In the eighties and early nineties the museum enjoyed a period of popularity with annual numbers of visits reported as around 500,000 each year.

In 1991 the trustees set a target of two million annual visits to its museums by 1999, and they opened all their museums and the art galleries for an extra two hours on Sundays - 12 noon to 5pm, instead of 2pm to 5pm. Though the increase from 1.3 million in 1991 to 2 million in 1999 proved impossible to achieve, the target reflected a feeling of confidence in the nationalised museums' service, and created an atmosphere in which staff were encouraged to experiment.

The success of the hands-on Natural History Centre in the museum led to an experimental Discovery Centre where the techniques that had worked for natural history were tried out on human cultures. Archaeology and ethnology staff set up the experimental centre for a brief period in the summer of 1991<sup>85</sup>.

The most ambitious experiment was the mysteriously named JASON Project. It was the brainchild of Bob Ballard, Director of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, USA, and the discoverer of the wrecks of the *rms Titanic* and the battleship *Bismarck*. In 1993 his JASON Project investigated the Sea of Cortez, between the Baja California peninsula and the coast of Mexico. On six days in each of two consecutive weeks from 1 March, several hour-long shows were broadcast to sites in the USA and to the museum in Liverpool. During each show the audiences asked questions that were answered live by the scientists at the investigation site. During the last few minutes of some of the shows an audience member operated a remote control to guide a submersible in the ocean at the investigation site. It worked in spite of storms in the Eastern United States, and won £600,000 of support from Barclays Life for a three year programme in Liverpool.

The second year of the Jason Project came from Belize, with live broadcasts at the Merseyside Maritime Museum between 28 February and 12 March 1994 that were seen by 4,937 people, a downturn on the 1993 total of 6,220. The third Jason year, 1995, also at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, came from Hawaii between 27 February and 11 March, and studied active volcanoes on the Big Island, and volcanoes on Io, one of Jupiter's Moons, using the NASA Infra-Red Telescope Facility on Mount Kea. The museum ran family days and a half-day course arranged with the University of Liverpool.

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<sup>85</sup> After its brief outing in 1991, the experimental hands-on human cultures centre lay dormant for more than ten years until it was revived in the museum's Weston Discovery Centre opened in 2005.

The fourth and, as it turned out final time JASON ran in Liverpool was in April 1996 and came from Florida. It set out to study aquatic systems in the Everglades and areas bordering the Florida Keys. It was the third year of Barclay Life's sponsorship, and the company declared that it had a policy of not supporting projects beyond three years. As no other sponsor could be found, Liverpool's involvement in the JASON project terminated.

Since the appointment of Patrick Sudbury as Keeper of Astronomy in 1969 the museum had covered physical as well as life sciences and earth sciences. On 9 September 1993 *Space* and *Time* galleries were opened next to the Planetarium on the top floor. The galleries cost was £375,000, and Dr. Mike Bode, who was Assistant Provost and Head of the Astrophysics Group at the Liverpool John Moores University, persuaded Stephen Hawking, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, to open the gallery via a telephone link.

Dr. Bode also persuaded the museum to enter an ambitious partnership with John Moores University and Royal Greenwich Observatory to site a large robotic telescope on the Canary Islands and control it remotely from Liverpool. He managed to set up the telescope at a cost of £2.5 million. The intention was that the museum would use imagery and information from the telescope for the public in the Space Gallery and Planetarium. However the public opening times of the museum were during the day and the telescope operated only at night. The partnership produced the remotely operated telescope but it did not produce much for the museum or its public.

At this time the museums charged for participation in the JASON Project, for entry to exhibitions, and for admission to the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Albert Dock. Charges for entry to the Merseyside Maritime Museum rose from 60p adults and 30p for concessions in 1980 to £1.50 and 75p in 1989. A passport ticket introduced in 1989 allowed visitors to return to the museum without further charge within one year. In November 1991 a local resident ticket was launched allowing unlimited access for one adult and two children for one year.

Advice on charging from Parliament was not very helpful. Richard Foster reported that a House of Commons committee report of January 1990, *Should Museums Charge?: Some Case Studies* appeared to offer...

...broad support for maintaining the *status quo* so far as charging for admission to NMGM institutions is concerned, i.e. free admission should be maintained where it has been traditionally so, but new attractions

should normally be introduced on the basis of a reasonable compulsory charge<sup>86</sup>.

In this mixed system admission to the museum and Walker Art Gallery on William Brown Street remained free, though visitors were charged for entry to some exhibitions. Museum staff struggled to make the exhibition charges operate effectively. Queen Noor al-Hussein of Jordan opened the exhibition *Jordan, Treasures from an Ancient Land* at the museum in 1991, but its entrance charge meant that only one in ten of museum visitors went to the exhibition. The compulsory charge was abandoned in favour of a 'trust the visitor payment'.

A *Monsters of the Deep* exhibition was shown at the museum for nearly ten months from March 1994. Entry to the exhibition cost £1 for an adult ticket and 50p for a concessionary ticket, with group rates of £2 for four or more people. After eleven weeks, admission income totalled only £14,801.

The *Dinosaurs Alive* charging exhibition ran for 28 weeks between February and September 1995, and was reckoned to be easily the museum's most popular exhibition with over 85,000 visitors. Nevertheless a survey showed that 25% considered the exhibition poor, or of poor value for money. Admission prices were £3.25 for adults, £2 for concessions and £10 for family groups.

The trustees discussed rolling out entrance charges to all of their museums. A major incentive was an oddity in tax legislation which meant that, if they charged entry, the museum would be seen as a business and could reclaim all Value Added Tax. At the Maritime Museum they paid about £30,000 VAT on the admission fees but reclaimed about £175,000 of VAT on the goods and services supplied to the site. The estimate of income from VAT that could be recovered if a charge was made at all venues was £500,000. Richard Foster resisted charging for entry to museums. He argued that they had been free for many decades, but he noted that 'there may be differences of opinion between Trustees on this issue.'<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> 1990. *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1990*, p. 33, 'Museums Admission Charges – Select Committee Report (D/5/90)' report to the Board of Trustees 6 February 1990 p.38, para.19. [Report on the House of Commons Education, Science and Arts Committee, 1990. *Should Museums Charge?: Some Case Studies*. 10 January.]

<sup>87</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1993*. pp.3-18, 'Corporate Plan – Stage 5 Report (2/93) Finance Committee 19 January 1993, p.8.



The mid-nineties saw a succession of new displays and three new public museums – the Museum of Liverpool Life, the Customs and Excise National Museum and the Conservation Centre.

The Museum of Liverpool Life opened on 1 May 1993 and the Customs and Excise National Museum opened in the Merseyside Maritime Museum building in 1995. Among new displays opened up in the Merseyside Maritime Museum was the *Transatlantic Slavery Gallery* opened on 24 October 1994 by Maya Angelou. The trustees also considered buying the *Beatles Story*, an attraction at the opposite end of Albert Dock from the Maritime Museum. They commissioned a report from the business advisers Pannell Kerr Forster but did not go ahead with the purchase. Foster introduced new tickets for admission to all the dockside venues – the Merseyside Maritime Museum complex, the Piermaster's House and Liverpool Life. He continued the local residents' passes providing unlimited visits for a year.

On 16 October 1996, Loyd Grossman, television presenter, chef and museum enthusiast, led a launch day for the new Conservation Centre. It opened to the public on the following day, and the Prince of Wales gave it a royal launch on 6 December. The centre was located in the former Midland Railway Goods Receiving Warehouse in central Liverpool and housed a set of well-equipped conservation workshops and a public gallery explaining the museum's work of conservation.

Work on the Conservation Centre project had been long and arduous but had not deflected Foster from planning his biggest scheme, the renovation of the museum. From the summer of 1994 Richard Foster earmarked the museum as the next development when the Conservation Centre was open.

Ambitions for the museum were spurred on by the arrival of the National Lottery in November 1994. It presented the best opportunity for capital investment in museums for a hundred years or more. Foster wanted to take over the areas of the building originally built for the Central Technical School, and then occupied by Liverpool Polytechnic and by John Moores University, as the Polytechnic became in 1992. He saw that the addition of their areas to the museum offered the chance to realise an ambitious vision for the museum. He planned an encyclopaedic museum in four parts:-

- The *Museum of Matter* was to deal with space and geological processes.

- The *Museum of Life* would cover natural history from the earliest times to the present.
- The *Museum of Society* would explore the culture and growth of societies.
- The *Museum of Art* was to explore the aesthetics of the living world and human artefacts.

The trustees appointed the consultants Touche Ross to produce a development plan for the museum, in association with Lord Cultural Resources, Michael Wilford and Partners and H. Philip Rockhill and Associates. The report included the first proposals to abandon the historic entrances to the 1860 and the 1900s buildings, and to build a new entrance to the museum. They suggested using the lightwell in the 1900s building to link the two buildings together with a new entrance with no steps, leading to a central space, which they called 'a lofty *front-to-back* entrance foyer'<sup>88</sup>.

The consultants also opened up discussions about the museum's name and suggestions included *Liverpool International Museum*, *Museums of Matter, of Life, of Society and of Art* and *Discovery!*

While he planned a big scheme to extend the museum Foster saw that existing areas were gloomy and forbidding, with poor access and facilities. He used European Regional Development Funding to make interim improvements, providing a brighter entrance area, better and more accessible toilets, two baby-change rooms, a cloakroom and a chair lift to give wheelchair access to the Aquarium in the basement. Most of these innovations were subsequently swept away by the major scheme, but visitors still use the male and female toilets that were installed in 1995 near to the Planetarium on what is now floor five of the museum.

Discussions with representatives of Liverpool John Moores University about taking over the floors beneath the museum's Horseshoe galleries, raised hope that they might hand it over soon, and the value of the University's part of the building was set at about £1 million. The extra space released by their departure would allow a big development scheme. In Foster's plan, it opened the way not only a new larger integrated museum, but for an ambitious revival of the

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<sup>88</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1995* (NML bound vol.), pp.81-88, 'Liverpool Museum – development options (13/95)' Building and Design Committee January 1995 – the report asks for comments on key questions being identified by Touche Ross, Michael Wilford and Partners, and Lord Cultural Resources, working on the 'Liverpool Museum Master Plan' – p.85, para.A2.7.

cultural heart of Liverpool. He suggested that his plans for the museum and the art gallery would lift the fortunes of nearby historic cultural buildings - St. George's Hall, the Central Library and three of the city's main theatres, the Liverpool Empire, the Royal Court and the Playhouse – not to mention the Conservation Centre in the restored Midland Railway Goods Receiving Warehouse.

The plans became an *Integrated Development Plan 1997-2001* which included works at the Museum of Liverpool Life, the Walker Art Gallery and the museum, and some works on a new storeroom. National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside owned a warehouse in an industrial area near the docks to the north of Liverpool. It had a floor area of 7,700 square metres on two levels, of which only the ground floor of 4,700 square metres could be used because the roof was so bad. The new store could take the antiquities, ethnology and decorative arts collections clearing space in the museum. The plan left the natural science collections in the museum.

The museums' trustees gave Foster's development plan the highest priority rating, but John Moores University put back the date of their move from the old Central Technical School. They became an apparently immovable obstruction in the path of the scheme.

A further complication arose when a steering group of museum staff questioned the master plan in the draft report by the Touche Ross consultancy team. The Touche Ross recommendations were that the museum needed a very ambitious remodelling to create a new front-to-back entranceway by roofing over an open courtyard in the middle of building. They also suggested new attractions including an Omnimax and an enlargement of the Aquarium into an *Oceans Experience*. Museum staff wanted to retain more space for storage of collections rather than send the stored collections of antiquities, ethnology and decorative arts to the storeroom in Bootle. Touche Ross refused to bow to this new less ambitious direction. A firm of Liverpool architects Ormrod & Partners were approached to do a technical feasibility study on the less disruptive plan suggested by the staff steering group.

Meanwhile at the Walker Art Gallery the staff steering group planned to upgrade the displays of paintings and the gallery's foyer, and to create a new prints and drawings room. At the Museum of Liverpool Life they planned new displays – *Homes and Communities* and a new King's Regiment Gallery.

The proposals for the museum became a contentious issue. How many collections would be transferred to the refurbished warehouse to the north of Liverpool? How radical would the internal refurbishment of the museum buildings be? Would new displays or storerooms be created in the parts of the building to be bought from John Moores University?

Richard Foster stuck to his decision that he would submit a single Heritage Lottery Fund bid for capital works at the Walker and Liverpool Life alongside a bigger project for the museum redevelopment. He said that the new less ambitious scheme for the museum led by the staff steering group showed flaws. It lacked an overall vision for the new museum, and failed to show that it would produce a satisfactory increase in the number of visits. In December 1995 he signalled his intention to take stronger control of planning the works at the museum and seconded his principal assistant, Amy de Joia, to a new post of project officer for a two-year period. He set her the task of preparing an outline bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for an overall scheme estimated at £40 million, and he appointed a development officer on a five-month secondment to help her establish a fund-raising strategy for the scheme.

In order to prepare bids for funding, de Joia had to redefine the contentious building project at the museum. Foster insisted that level access to the museum must replace the 39 steps to the existing entrance, and that a new central circulation area must replace the small and cramped entrance set to one side of the building. In other words the plans would revert to most of what the Touche Ross report had suggested.

The plan showed that visit numbers would rise from 500,000 visits to at least 700,000 per year, and the new museum's theme would be 'discovery – from the oceans to the stars'.

In the expansive early years of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Foster looked to increase the number of museums in his portfolio. He had now identified a reduced number of sites as the top priority for development. The Board of Trustees set as their highest priority for 1997 the redevelopment of the museum, and the intended purchase of the areas of the building owned by Liverpool John Moores University. He also set ambitious aspirations for new attractions in the museum, with a strong emphasis on new technologies. A *World Info Theatre* would be based on the JASON experiment linking the museum to scientific expeditions around the world. A *Space Theatre* was to replace the Planetarium with something closer to an Omnimax cinema and

linked to the robotic telescope on the Canary Isles. *A Walk Through History* would provide an 'experience' of the history of the natural and human worlds. *Oceans Experience* built on the aquarium with 'walk-through' tanks, touch tanks, and live television links. *A Virtual Reality Museum* would present 3D scans of the collections. *World View from a City* was a theatre project to present Liverpool's history in the museum and in other buildings in the area including St. George's Hall.

As the campaign began to gather pace, the approved message for important visitors emphasised these forward-looking display concepts and the long history of the museum. Foster's revitalised museum was planned for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2001 of Lord Derby's founding bequest, and would finally finish the job of repairing the damage inflicted by the bombing of 1941. In 1996 Secretary of State for National Heritage Virginia Bottomley visited, and the chair of the trustees of the National Heritage Lottery Fund Lord Rothschild visited at the invitation of the Friends of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. Rothschild gave a talk at the annual Roscoe Dinner, held at the Conservation Centre, and he toured the Walker Art Gallery, Conservation Centre and the museum where he officially opened an exhibition on Foster's *Integrated Development Plan, A Vision for the Future*.

The trustees adopted Foster's plan. They gave it the name *NMGM 2001* and appointed business consultants E.C. Harris of Liverpool to manage the project. In September 1996 they approved a package of proposed works at the Walker Art Gallery, the Museum of Liverpool Life, the Bootle store and, mainly, at the museum, at an estimated cost of £42 million. An initial application was to go to the National Heritage Lottery Fund and advertisements were to go out for architects.

Negotiations began again with John Moores University offering £700,000 for the spaces below the Horseshoe galleries. They were key to the construction of the new flat-access front-to-back entrance plan which was so integral to the plan. The target set for the purchase was September 1998.

Over the next few months estimated costs of the various elements in the plan went up and down. Bits went out of the plan and came back in as costings and ideas evolved. The works on the store were removed from the main project because they diluted the impact of works at the museum, the Walker Art Gallery and the Museum of Liverpool Life. The project team also investigated the option

of going into partnership with commercial organisations to finance and run *Oceans Experience* and the large format cinema.

In November 1996, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, Virginia Bottomley, announced the grant for the next three years for national museums, including National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. Based on her figures the trustees calculated that their grant would effectively reduce in value by £6 million between 1993 and 2000. They would have to introduce across-the-board admission charges during the financial year of April 1997 to March 1998. They were reluctant to introduce charges for venues that had always been free, including the museum, the Walker Art Gallery and the Lady Lever Art Gallery, but they felt that they had no option. By this time many of the other national museums had introduced charges ranging from £3 for adults at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, up to £5.50 at the National Maritime Museum and the Natural History Museum in London. The proposal for Liverpool was an adult charge of £3, but the ticket would favour local residents because it would offer unlimited visits to all of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside venues for a year.

At a special meeting in January 1997, the trustees deferred the introduction of admission charges until after the forthcoming general election, in case the new government brought changes in funding policy. They also reaffirmed their determination to continue with their ambitious capital plans to revive the museum by 2001, in time for the 150th anniversary of Lord Derby's founding bequest.

The 'outline' application went off to the Heritage Lottery Fund on 31 January 1997. It asked for a grant of £28.4million - 75% of a total project cost of £37.9 million.

In February the building design team was appointed with Law & Dunbar-Nasmith, Edinburgh as architect, and Gardiner & Theobald Management Services, Manchester, as project manager. The quantity surveyors were Rex Procter & Partners, Bradford; the structural engineers were Curtins Consulting Engineers, Liverpool; and the building services engineers were David McAspurn & Partnership, Liverpool.

Two Heritage Lottery Fund assessors visited in April - Celina Fox, a member of their expert panel and Janet Carter, the case officer for the Liverpool project. They suggested a separate 'fast-track' application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for

up to £1 million to pay for the work in the store in north Liverpool to rehouse archaeology and ethnology collections. A 'fast track' application went off in July 1997.

The main application, in four volumes, went off to the Heritage Lottery Fund on 17 December 1997. As it turned out the 'fast-track' application was not considered separately. The Heritage Lottery Fund assessed the two applications together and their trustees' decision was not expected until July 1998.

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## Chapter 12 – 1997-2001 – Highs and Lows

In the general election held on 1 May 1997, the Labour Party displaced the Conservatives in a landslide victory. Richard Foster and the chairman of the trustees David McDonnell went to see the new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith. He asked them to postpone the introduction of admission charges promising a review of funding in the autumn. The trustees agreed to postpone charges for school visits but felt that they had to go ahead with general admission charges.

And so, on 7 July 1997, admission charges were introduced across National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. For the first time in 144 years there was a charge at the door of the museum - £3 for an adult.

The introduction of admission charges did not fit well with what the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith wanted. In December 1997 he issued a consultation paper on access to national museums and galleries, and free admission. He wrote to David McDonnell, chairman of the trustees of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside – ‘My first decision on taking up office last May was to launch a review of access to the national museums and galleries... We made it clear that we would like to see institutions doing all they can to balance the books while maximising access. That remains the key to our approach to this issue – the broadest possible access’<sup>89</sup>.

Chris Smith conceded that the scheme that allowed access to the museum for a year with one ticket was ‘interesting’, but essentially there was a stand-off between the Secretary of State and the Trustees, and the entrance charges remained in force.

Negotiations with John Moores University over the acquisition of their part of the building languished for some time but revived when the Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Toyne wrote to Richard Foster. He said that the university could no longer meet the date of September 1998 to quit the building, but they would agree to go in December. The contract for the sale was about to be signed when the Heritage Lottery Fund decided that they needed a District Valuer’s report to validate the price. The exchange of contracts was delayed but eventually the much-longed-for hand-over of the building was finally achieved on Tuesday 26

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<sup>89</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1998*. pp.264-278 ‘Review of Access to National Museums and Galleries (21/98)’ Board of Trustees 17 February 1998, pp. 270-271.



January 1999. National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside finally had control of the whole building and could go ahead with the ambitious plan to put in a new central atrium joining the two halves of the building together.

However by the middle of 1998 doubts began to emerge that the *NMGM 2001* project would indeed be completed by 2001, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Earl of Derby's founding bequest. The zoology curator Clem Fisher was planning an exhibition illustrating her research on Lord Derby and his extraordinary menagerie and natural history collection at Knowsley Hall. Maybe this exhibition could go into the Upper Horseshoe gallery for summer 2001 and would be a fitting celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary while the major capital project was completed later.

The other worry of 1998 was that the first months of charging admission failed to produce the expected income. From July 1997 to March 1998 the total income generated from admissions was £391,037, 79% of the target figure of £495,083. Richard Foster and the trustees feared that if this shortfall was repeated over the coming years the deficit in their revenue budget would increase each year by hundreds of thousands of pounds. Not only would their main sponsor, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, forbid this, but it would also throw out the budget predictions that they had submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to gain a grant.

The trustees had to take up a clear position on charging admission and on Chris Smith's demands for better access to museums. They said that they offered a reasonable service on the budget they got. They opened eight public museums and galleries for 360 days a year, and a £3 ticket gave unlimited entry to all eight venues for 12 months. £1.50 bought concession ticket for a year, and £7.50 family ticket. But experience showed that this did not bring in enough money and so, in order to balance their budget, they needed to introduce charges for school visits from September 1998.

On 24 July 1998 Chris Smith detailed the biggest ever increase in cultural funding, including special help for national museums to remove admission charges. He promised £100 million for national museums and galleries, but his support would depend them achieving clear targets – free entry for children in 1999; free entry for pensioners in 2000; and universal free entry in 2001.

Meetings were held with officials of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport on 8 September 1998, and with Chris Smith on 21 October.

Richard Foster said that the £100 million spread over three years was not enough to do the job, particularly as removing charges for entry would also remove the museums' exemption from paying VAT. Officials of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport told him that making national museums exempt from paying VAT was against European Union law. The situation remained unresolved and entrance charges remained in place for a further three years.

There was a double dose of good news in the summer of 1998. The Conservation Centre was named European Museum of the Year, and, on 22 July, the Heritage Lottery Fund announced a grant of £24 million. The decision was taken at the Heritage Lottery Fund trustees' meeting on 16 July. It was the largest award ever made to a museum, and the second largest award for any heritage scheme.

£24 million was 71% of a total scheme cost of £33.7 million. The only part of the scheme that the Heritage Lottery Fund trustees refused to fund was the refurbishment of the 17<sup>th</sup> century galleries at the Walker. Janet Carter, Senior Case Officer for the Heritage Lottery Fund reported that her trustees thought the work on the two galleries was a lower priority because there was already full public access to the rooms and the works of art, and because other funders might be interested in supporting the project. And so it turned out. The galleries were refurbished with a £500,000 grant from the Wolfson Foundation.

The Heritage Lottery Fund project was given the science-fiction name *Into the Future*. Richard Foster set up thirteen 'stage teams' of staff to oversee each part of the project, and appointed London-based designers Jasper Jacobs Associates to work on the new displays and public areas, along with their Canadian sub-consultants Reich + Petch to work on graphic design. The newly revitalised museum would open to the public in August or September 2001.

Fund-raising for *Into the Future* gathered pace when Phil Redmond, Chairman of Mersey Television, and 21 members of the cast of *Brookside* and *Hollyoaks* launched a public appeal on 6 April 1999. Phil Redmond also hosted a charity ball with a Greek and Roman theme in aid of the appeal in July. The Littlewoods Organisation agreed to a £250,000 sponsorship, and the Friends of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside donated £100,000 towards the new atrium for the museum. In November Cherie Blair hosted a reception at 10 Downing Street, which was followed by a buffet supper at Spencer House, hosted by Lord Rothschild, the chair of the trustees of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Liverpool solicitor and philanthropist Rex Makin offered £150,000 in support of *Into the Future*.

In June 1999 there was a change in strategy for the building works. Instead of keeping science staff and collections on the Horseshoe galleries, while their new storerooms and offices were created below them, the decision was made to clear this part of the building to allow the building work to go ahead. The Upper Horseshoe gallery had been closed to the public since the Second World War, and the upgrading of the museum's buildings would open both Horseshoe galleries to the public.

The museum had already hired a couple of industrial units in the Maritime Enterprise Park in Bootle for regional history collections, sculptures from the archaeology and ethnology collections, and some assorted aquarium equipment. Three further units were acquired to provide 380 square metres of offices and over a thousand square metres of temporary storage space for the natural history and physical sciences collections.

Income from admissions continued to be disappointingly below expectations, and Foster reported that the day-to-day finances of National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside were 'on a knife-edge'<sup>90</sup>. Nevertheless his senior staff had bids in for over fifty un-funded staff posts, and £500,000 worth of extra work caused by the *Into the Future* capital scheme.

In September Richard Foster gave notice to the trustees of his plan to retire in 2002, and he was appointed chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund Expert Panel for Museums, Libraries and Archives, an important advisory role to the trustees of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Foster was determined that the museum and Walker Art Gallery on William Brown Street would not 'go dark' as he termed it. Though the building work was extensive, they would both remain open throughout.

The public face of the museum motored on with comedian Ken Dodd opening the exhibition *Alice: The Wonderland of Lewis Carroll* in July 1999. But galleries were starting to close because of the building works. The popular Land Transport gallery closed on 21 June 1999<sup>91</sup>, and the Aquarium on 31 August 1999.

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<sup>90</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 1999*. pp.619-622 '1999-200 Budget Performance (75/98)' Finance & Audit Committee 31 August 1999, p.620, para.6.

<sup>91</sup> As the Land Transport gallery closed, the major exhibit, the 1838 Liverpool and Manchester railway locomotive *Lion* went on loan to Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, and after some years return to Liverpool to be prepared for display in the Museum of Liverpool which is to open in 2011.

As galleries closed, the noise of the building work began to penetrate the remaining public areas, and smoke and dust from the building work set off alarms which meant that the building was evacuated. Visitors complained about an additional entry charge for the exhibition, *Art of the Harley*, and the charge was removed within days of the exhibition's opening.

The planned opening date for the revitalised museum was moved – and split into two phases. Phase one was to open in October 2001 and phase two in February 2002.

As the capital works proceeded at the museum along with smaller schemes at the Walker and the Museum of Liverpool Life, balancing the books was becoming a major headache. Financial security depended on a four-fold increase in predicted income from £565,000 to £2.4 million in 2003-2004<sup>92</sup>. Visit numbers were going down as capital works impacted at all three sites, and increases based on the impact of new attractions were not realised because of delays to the *Into the Future* project.

The chairman of the trustees met the Minister for the Arts, Alan Howarth, in London on 8 December 1999. Richard Foster was ill and could not attend. The Minister demanded that National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside widen its audience to include disadvantaged groups in society, including ethnic minorities, people living on low incomes, and people with disabilities. Alan Howarth said that he regarded social inclusion as a priority for a national museum service in a provincial city.

Richard Foster was knighted in the New Year's honours list of 2000, and the Minister demanded that he restructure the staff. Foster proposed to group attractions in the museum under a new department of 'Collections Access', which would work alongside a new exhibitions department and the existing education division. He also wrestled with reports of inadequate levels of gallery attendant staff and found himself struggling with a tangle of working patterns and levels of pay.

A total of about £1.7 million of extra spend had accumulated on the *Into the Future* capital scheme. The extra came from changes to the scope of building

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<sup>92</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2000* (NML bound vol.), pp.95-110 'Corporate Plan Stage 2: Issues and Forward Programme (8/00)' Board of Trustees 18 January 2000, p.100, para17j.

work, overspending on the Walker Art Gallery work, increases to consultant fees and increases to the cost of moving collections. It was clear that the process for authorising extra works and costs was not strong enough and that the staff 'Stage Teams' had not been getting information to the designers on time. In February 2000 more staff were appointed to control the project and some of the proposed redisplay was cut. Nearly a thousand square metres of the Lower Horseshoe would be refurbished so that it could be opened to the public, but it would be reopened without a new display. Asbestos was discovered at both the museum and the Walker Art Gallery, and staff worried that the architects Law & Dunbar-Nasmith, based in Scotland, could not keep a close enough check on the building work on site in Liverpool. Reports of items missing from the building contractor's site in the museum from March 2000 onwards culminated in a report early in May of the theft of an original Edwardian cast iron spiral staircase which had led to a small observatory on the museum roof.

On 1 May 2000 Amy de Joia, who had been appointed project officer in 1995, was promoted to a new post of project director. Her Projects Division was strengthened and became a separate unit with new posts, having previously been a section in the Director's Office.

The *Into the Future* project had become so complicated that the predicted outcome cost varied almost week by week as different factors emerged. When Amy de Joia took up her new role, the anticipated overspend on the capital scheme was beaten down to £1.3 million<sup>93</sup>, and savings of £1.9 million over three or four years pulled the museums' operational budget back into balance. After a month or two, de Joia's estimate of the predicted overspend on *Into the Future* had risen to £2 million<sup>94</sup>. On 6 October 2000 the Department of Culture Media and Sport offered £500,000 towards the cost of the treatment of asbestos at the Walker Art Gallery and the museum.

The first part of *Into the Future*, a new wing of the Museum of Liverpool Life opened to the public on 21 July 2000. On 23 August the newly expanded museum played host to the second year of activities for Slavery Remembrance Day. UNESCO nominated 23 August as *International Day for the Remembrance of the*

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<sup>93</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2000*. pp.361-363 'NMGM 2001 – Effect of Potential Overspend on General Fund (44/00)' Board of Trustees 9 May 2000, p.361, para.2.

<sup>94</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2000*. pp.441-443 'NMGM 01 projected overspend and the impact on NMGM's Financial Plan (53/00)' Finance Committee 23 May 2000, p.442, para.2.

*Slave Trade and its Abolition* and the anniversary was marked with a programme of music and poetry. Then there was a more formal royal opening by Prince Charles on 13 December 2000. The museum was soon attracting more than 300,000 visits a year, and became a key attraction in Liverpool's central docks area. Within a few months of the opening Richard Foster started to propose that a new larger building was required for the Museum of Liverpool Life, and it should be on a scale to match the 'three graces', the Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool building, the iconic group of buildings on Liverpool's Pierhead<sup>95</sup>.

*Into the Future* work continued on William Brown Street, in the Walker Art Gallery and the museum. Here contractor's work expanded into more and more areas. Nevertheless the old entrance and a few galleries remained open to the public, except for brief periods in 2000. The fire alarms went off on 23 March and the building was cleared. The system would not reset and the building was closed for five days, including the weekend of 25 and 26 March when events for National Science week were planned. The breakdown of the fire alarm system was attributed to the contractor's works, and meant that the building was closed again for a single day on Wednesday 29 March.

The museum was closed again on weekdays between 12 July and 16 October 2000, to allow for 'heavy drilling' by the contractor. Schools half term followed soon after the closure - 23-27 October - and the contractor was still drilling in several areas during that week.

In November 2000 the trustees of the Clore Foundation offered £250,000 towards the fit out of the new Natural History Centre in the museum.

The giant Blue Streak rocket from the museums' collections went off to the new National Space Centre in Leicester, to form the centrepiece of a new glass tower. On 14 December 2000, while work was carried out in the tower, a chain hoist came loose and swung into the rocket. Engineer conservators from the Imperial War Museum, Duxford repaired the damage.

The costs of the capital works and their impact of the works on the museum's operation were a continual nagging worry. In February 2001 Richard Foster proposed that the balance of the Collection Purchase Fund was spent on

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<sup>95</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2001*, pp.409-415 'Liverpool Vision – Fourth Grace (28/01)' Board of Trustees 27 February 2001.

refurbishing the museum's top floor café. It was, he said, an important earner of income. The trustees were split over the issue. A group of trustees was concerned that support for work on the collections was suffering. They had recently been annoyed because Foster stopped an annual contribution of £25,000 to the museums' Academic Publications Fund. They returned to the subject when he suggested using the Collection Purchase Fund to refurbish the café. Foster felt that his attempts to solve budget problems were being blocked and he asked trustees 'to take a consistent line where 'special requests' of this nature are concerned'<sup>96</sup>. He argued that restoring a contribution to the Academic Publications Fund would simply increase the budget deficit.

The Heritage Lottery Fund commissioned a report on the *Into the Future* scheme from the construction managers Bovis Lend Lease. Its calculation of the potential overspend on *Into the Future* was the highest yet, at nearly £6 million. Richard Foster saw a copy of the report in February 2001 and was encouraged to ask for an additional grant of £3.9 million, 65% of a projected overspend and an increase of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the project from £24 million to £27.9 million. The Heritage Lottery Fund trustees approved the additional money on 27 February 2001. They put conditions on their extra grant, including a demand that National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside cut its operating budgets to find an additional £1.3 million towards the increased project costs.

On Thursday 8 March 2001 Richard Foster died at Swanage in Dorset.

The news of his death spread quickly and numerous people in many walks of life were devastated when they heard the news. There was shock, surprise, and even panic among his colleagues in National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. About 200 people attended his funeral service at Liverpool Parish Church on Friday 16 March.

The inquest into his death on Thursday 19 April found that Richard Foster had taken his own life. He had been in London and, instead of returning home, he had hired a car and driven to Swanage. A whisky bottle was found on steps overlooking the deserted beach. He had apparently filled his pockets with sand and drowned in the sea. Tributes to his work and character came from every side. They said that he set himself impossibly high standards and that he felt that he did not exert enough control in his work.

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<sup>96</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2001*, pp.339-359 'Corporate Plan 2001 and Funding Agreement 2001-04 (27/01)' Board of Trustees 27 February 2001, p.364, para.22.

A memorial service was held at the Anglican Cathedral, Liverpool, on 6 June 2001, and all National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside venues were closed during the afternoon. A memorial appeal set up after he died, received many hundreds of donations and raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for he museums.

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## Chapter 13 – 2001-2008 – Capital of Culture

As an interim measure when Richard Foster died, the trustees set up a 'directorship group' of nine senior staff. The directorship had an inner 'kitchen cabinet' of three - the Keeper of the Maritime Museum, the Head of Central Services Division and the Secretary to the Trustees. The Head of Central Services, Tony Archard, acted as 'accounting officer', a role required by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. He had a veto over the rest of the group if required, though afterwards they all agreed that the veto had not been needed.

The appointment of a new director took some months. David Fleming, director of Tyne and Wear Museums, was appointed in June, and moved from Newcastle in October 2001. In the meantime, he visited Liverpool as 'director-designate'.

The capital scheme at the museum became more complicated and slowed down over the summer of 2001. In September the architects wrote to the project managers wearily complaining that 'the project as a whole is suffering from an enormous amount of fatigue'<sup>97</sup>.

It proved impossible to find a contractor willing to take on the construction of a new aquarium. There was a suggestion that the museum's specification was difficult to fulfil and needed to be revised. The architects began requesting extra fees and the builders claimed extra costs, but it proved difficult to agree a resolution of the requests and claims.

To add to the gloom, the museum was also attracting its lowest number of visits since it reopened in 1966. The figures were counted over financial years, from 1 April in one year to 31 March in the next year, and the worst year was 2000-2001 with 180,297 visits. The next worst were the two years on either side of it. Even a high profile fashion exhibition *Vivienne Westwood: the collection of Romilly McAlpine* between May and September failed to improve things. Numbers were constrained by the building work, and by the entrance charges, and probably by a curious policy of attempting to attract audiences from the Walker Art Gallery rather than addressing the museum's traditional family audience.

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<sup>97</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2001*. pp.1153-1180 'NMGM 2001 – Progress Report (91/01)' Building and Design Committee 18 September 2001, pp.1172-1174, letter of 4 September 2001, from Mark O Sidgwick, LDN Architects, to Jeff Day, Gardiner & Theobald Management Services, p.1172.

The museum closed for five days in early October 2001 when contractors were working on security systems and the transfer of the security control room.

David Fleming, in his role as director designate attended a meeting of the interim directorate group on 18 July and they decided to drop admission charges. The Board of Trustees ratified the decision on 4 September. 'Magic eye' counters were installed at all venues and entry was free from 1 December 2001.

Fleming looked to rationalise the names of the museum and of the whole organisation. The museum's current name was Liverpool Museum which, he said, suggested a local history museum and was confused with the Museum of Liverpool Life. The full title of National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside was cumbersome but necessary since it was given in the Parliamentary Order in Council which set the organisation up, but he suggested that the organisation could operate or 'trade' under a shorter name. Within a couple of months the trustees had reduced the options for the organisation to *Liverpool National Museums* or *National Museums Liverpool*. After due consultation, they agreed to *National Museums Liverpool*, and this new name came into effect on 16 April 2003.

The new name for the museum was not so easily or quickly resolved. There were brainstorming, consultations, qualitative studies, and ever-changing lists of possible names...

*National Museum of Merseyside*  
*Museum of Science and Culture*  
*Discovery Museum*  
*World Museum*  
*Museum of Science and World Cultures*  
*Metropolitan Museum Liverpool...*

A vote by visitors, 'opinion formers', staff, and the Friends of National Museums Liverpool produced a small but definite lead for the name *World Museum Liverpool*. However the mass of research and discussion led to a deferral of any decision until early in 2004 when the trustees finally agreed to adopt this as the new name, effective from Spring 2005 when the launch of the extended museum was planned.

David Fleming set about creating a new management team, displacing some of the old team and creating two critical new posts. A new Director of Public Services took charge of all the keepers in charge of venues who had previously

reported directly to the director. This post was filled by Sharon Granville who had previously worked for David Fleming in Tyne and Wear Museums. A new director of Development and Communications took charge of education, marketing, communication and exhibitions, and this post was filled by Amy de Joia.

The *Into the Future* capital project passed some milestones in 2002. The Walker Art Gallery, closed since June 2001, reopened in February 2002 with the new exhibition galleries created as part of the *Into the Future* project. The first exhibition there was *George Romney, 1734–1802*, and it was followed by *The Art of Paul McCartney* from May 2002.

The *Romney* exhibition opened with an entrance charge. Though entry to all the venues was now free, the trustees had reserved the right to charge for entry to exhibitions. Half way through the exhibition Fleming removed the entrance charge, and, unusually among national museums, National Museums Liverpool has made no further charges for exhibitions.

The museum project was beginning to seem endless, but at least some offices and stores were finished. In February 2002 staff displaced to Bootle by the building work returned from their 28 months of exile, and the director and his office returned to the museum in April from their temporary accommodation. The natural history collections moved back to their new stores between February and May. Building work continued around them until completion was achieved on 20 June 2002.

The project's budgets were adjusted to account for estimated increases in 'base build' costs, and another bid to Heritage Lottery Fund went off on 24 July 2002. This was now the third bid for a grant for the *Into the Future* project. In July 1998 the Heritage Lottery Fund had announced its original grant for the project of £23.8 million. In February 2001 they had agreed to increase the grant by £3.9 million to £27.9 million. This final request was for a further £4.3 million, and was agreed on 12 November 2002.

A mediator was called in to settle the difference of opinion with the building contractors over the money they were due. The meeting took place over two days, 25 and 26 November 2002, with the mediator, a QC who specialised in construction contracts.

By this time little of the museum was left open. The Planetarium had its millionth visitor in early June. A series of exhibitions was designed to appeal to the museum's traditional family audience and began to lift it from its low point in visit numbers. The *Teddy Bear Story: 100 years of the Teddy Bear* exhibition opened in October 2002, and was followed by *Grossology* from July 2003. The latter, an upbeat interactive show about how the body works, attracted over 4,000 visits on peak days.

On 15 May 2003, the Duke of Gloucester visited the museum. As soon as the royal party stepped across the threshold the fire alarms went off. Nevertheless he was guided around the new areas that had been created and was shown the plans for all that would go in them.

New staff were appointed to manage the fitting out of the building with displays and public facilities. The project management company Fraser Randall was appointed to work alongside them. They drew up a new programme for completion of the work at the Walker Art Gallery, a *Craft and Design Gallery*, and for the fit-out of the museum.

The first exhibit went into the refurbished museum in March 2004. A thirteen metre high totem pole, or, more properly, a house frontal pole, from North West Canada was installed at one end of the new atrium. Next in were two ancient Egyptian statues of the lion-headed goddess *Sekhmet*. They were taken from display in the museum's old entrance and craned down the street to the new entrance. A photographer from the Liverpool Echo followed the operation, and photographed a parking attendant as he threatened the crane driver with a parking fine. On 17 March the story appeared in the Echo under the headline 'Warden tries to book crane as it moves museum statue'. On the next day the story was picked up by the Scotsman, Daily Mirror, Daily Express and several regional papers. The Sun ran a picture story and the news went round the world to the Sydney Morning Herald.

A third main exhibit for the new atrium, a huge pterosaur skeleton cast from an original in the University of Texas at Austin, arrived from Canada where the cast had been made. It was suspended from an elaborate rig in the new atrium in November 2004.

The opening date for the extended museum was set as 29 April 2005. Bits of the building work were revisited while fit-out works went on. There was extra work

on a bridge outside the new main entrance and extensive work on the new main staircase in the atrium.

On 28 August 2004 the last bit of the *Into the Future* project at the Walker Art Gallery opened - the *Craft and Design Gallery* on the ground floor. It shows items from the decorative art and costume collections, and like the museum's new displays, was designed by Jasper Jacobs Associates.

Alongside the *Into the Future* project, David Fleming was involved in negotiations for a new museum about Liverpool to replace the Museum of Liverpool Life. Liverpool City Council and the development agency Liverpool Vision proposed a *Fourth Grace* development overlooking the Mersey next to Liverpool's iconic Pierhead, and were investigating the prospects of a museum element in a public-private project. Fleming envisioned a new *Museum of Liverpool* – 'a world-class urban history museum housing, among other things, our famous land transport collections and a host of themes relating to the history of Liverpool, including, due recognition of the city's extraordinary contribution to British and World popular culture'<sup>98</sup>.

Fleming and his Director of Public Services, Sharon Granville, started meetings with the chosen architect, Will Alsop, in January 2003. Their bargaining chip was ownership of part of the land where the development was to be sited, and their ambition was to create the world's greatest city museum.

On 4 June 2003 Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced that Liverpool was the UK's nomination to be European Capital of Culture 2008. Twelve UK cities submitted applications in March 2002. Liverpool had worked hard on the bid but was by no means the pre-announcement favourite to win. In Newcastle/Gateshead officials felt so certain of a win that they booked an aeroplane with a congratulatory banner. The plane operator's offer to fly to Liverpool instead was eagerly taken up. As Tessa Jowell visited the city for the victory celebrations the plane flew overhead.

Three days later, on 7 June Liverpool was awarded World Heritage Site status. The designated site extended from Liverpool's docks through its historic commercial centre to the whole of William Brown Street, including the museum.

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<sup>98</sup> *National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside Reports to the Board of Trustees and Committees 2002*, pp.363-368 '4<sup>th</sup> Grace – NMGM Policy (36/02)' Board of Trustees 18 June 2002, p.364, para.2.

The planned *Fourth Grace* was at the heart of the new World Heritage Site, and Will Alsop's plans had the Museum of Liverpool opening within the *Fourth Grace* on 1 October 2008 – within the year that Liverpool would be European Capital of Culture. But the space available for the museum had been reduced to 9,000 square metres, and signs of fractures in the discussions began to appear. Then, suddenly, on 19 July 2004, the project partners - Liverpool Vision, North West Development Agency, Liverpool City Council and National Museums Liverpool – announced that the plans to build Liverpool's *Fourth Grace* were cancelled.

Initially the cancellation on the *Fourth Grace* dulled the Capital of Culture plans, but David Fleming continued with plans for a new free-standing Museum of Liverpool on the museums' own property. The North West Development Agency came in with a grant of £2.5 million towards the project<sup>99</sup> and, in January 2005, the Danish architects 3XNeilson were appointed.

Fleming also planned for a new museum on the theme of slavery, to replace the *Transatlantic Slavery Gallery* in the Merseyside Maritime Museum. The first phase was to be a new display on the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum. The next step was to be a new museum of slavery in the Dock Traffic Office. Formerly occupied by Granada Television, the Dock Traffic Office is a high profile building on the corner of Albert Dock which could be linked to the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum by a bridge. National Museums Liverpool took a lease on the Dock Traffic office with an option to buy, and commissioned Liverpool architects Austin-Smith:Lord to report on how the building could be adapted and linked to the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

Meanwhile refurbishment of Sudley House began in April 2005 and the building was closed to the public for building works including the removal of a step at the entrance and a lift to both public floors.

Work at the museum progressed and the erection of new illuminated pillars at its new entrance attracted attention. The existing entrance, up 39 steps, was both dominant and well-known to thousands of visitors. Two huge new fin-shaped pillars were internally illuminated and were intended to clearly mark the new way in to the museum. An irate architect wrote to the Liverpool Daily Post describing them as 'horrendous flashing disco lights' and said that they would 'not go amiss at a Gala bingo hall'<sup>100</sup>.

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<sup>99</sup> Heal, Sharon, 2004. 'Cloud lifted to make way for new museum'. *Museums Journal*, December, p.8.

<sup>100</sup> Serridge, Nick, 2005, 'Blot on landscape'. Letter to *Daily Post*, 8 February.

On 29 April 2005 the upgraded and extended museum finally opened its new doors to the public. For days before the public opening there were special events for press and media, volunteers and donors. Loyd Grossman, in his first public engagement as chairman of the Board of Trustees, cut a ribbon across the new entrance as the museum opened at 10a.m. About a thousand people attended including stilt walkers, role players, drummers, a ringmaster, a robot and a soloist Baha'i performer. A choir of more than 80 local schoolchildren performed an anthem written especially for the occasion.

The architects Law & Dunbar-Nasmith had roofed over the open courtyard between the old museum and the 1900s extension and converted it into a tall new atrium. With staircases and lifts to one side and bridged by high-level walkways, it was the core of the new museum, and gave direct access to all public areas. The atrium floor is covered, as museum geologists have noted, with Elterwater Slate from Langdale, Cumbria, a metamorphosed volcanic ash about 400 million years old.

For a total cost of £35 million the museum offered 20,663 new exhibits in 5,405 square metres of new public areas, with a further 4,440 square metres of storage and support services. Stores for natural history collections were built in the museum. Scientific and human history material was stored off-site National Museums Liverpool's north Liverpool stores.

The public areas followed the theme set in the mid-nineties - 'discovery – from the oceans to the stars'. It sounded poetic but was a practical variation on the encyclopaedic vision proposed by generations of the museum's directors. It ultimately resolved itself into floors roughly divided into:-

Stars – Earth – Humans – Animals – Fish - Entrance

Liverpool's *Nerve* magazine described the refurbished and extended museum.

The refurbished £35 million museum now promises a view of the world 'from the oceans to the stars'.

Access has been much improved; the entrance is now at ground level instead of up dozens of steps. This leads into the stunning new glass atrium where the old museum connects to the extension in the former John Moores University building, where most of the new galleries are located. The renovation has also seen the reopening of galleries that had been closed since the museum was bombed in the Second World War. The

old mish-mash of exhibits has been replaced by clearly defined new sections: 'Space and Time', 'Natural World', 'Human World', and 'Earth'.

Additions to the museum include a new bug house and aquarium with marine and insect life better displayed than before while the Weston Discovery and the Clore Natural History centres offer the chance to get 'hands on' with exhibits from the human and natural world respectively - always good for getting kids interested. Exhibits are further brought to life by the Treasure House Theatre, which puts on live performances in relation to the exhibits. Meanwhile the new World Cultures gallery contains a selection of the antiquities brought to Liverpool by its international traders. This does a good job of explaining not only the differing cultures of the world but also how the city developed due to its international connections.

Large parts of the museum - such as the ancient civilisation and rainforest sections - have hardly changed at all in twenty years; they are still mainly objects in glass cases with little cards. However, the museum hopes to continue re-development as more money becomes available.

This is a much more user-friendly Liverpool Museum, with things explained in a way that's interesting, fun and easy to understand without being dumbed down.<sup>101</sup>

In the first five months of opening the extended museum the number of visits equalled the previous year's total of 320,000. But, in September 2005, a few months after opening, the two lifts in the new atrium broke down leaving only the stairs to take visitors between six floors. Staff pressed the museum's goods lift into use, guiding visitors to and from it through non-public areas. It soon became evident that problems with the main public lifts were serious and they remained out of commission for six months, until April 2006. Inevitably visitors became disillusioned and the increase in numbers slowed down. Nevertheless the museum was packed for February half term in 2006 with 36,187 visits in seven days.

Three tragic deaths rocked the museum and made a deep impact on those who witnessed the incidents as well as the families and friends of those concerned. On 15 May 2006 a young man, Alexander Dutton, fell from the top floor of the

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<sup>101</sup> Taylor, Kenn, 2005. 'World Museum Liverpool'. *Nerve*, issue 6.

[http://www.catalystmedia.org.uk/issues/nerve6/world\\_museum.htm](http://www.catalystmedia.org.uk/issues/nerve6/world_museum.htm) accessed 27.12.2009



atrium staircase to his death. The inquest on 13 July revealed that he climbed over the glass balustrade and dropped from there. The coroner said there was no evidence that he intended to end his life and he may have been having a 'mental aberration'. Temporary screens were put up to prevent similar incidents but on 26 November 2006 there was a further tragedy. Laura Bailey, aged 17, visited the museum with her baby son Joseph, to meet the baby's father Kevin Howard, aged 20. She was on floor four when he stabbed her six times. She passed the baby to a visitor nearby and fell to the floor. Howard ran to the museum atrium, climbed over the glass balustrade onto a ledge and jumped to his death. Museum staff struggled to staunch Laura Bailey's bleeding, but she died where she was.

Huge banners were permanently installed over the front of the atrium staircase to prevent further incidents, and the extended museum began to recover from its initial difficulties and tragedies. 524,465 visits were made to World Museum in 2006, putting it well up into the top ten UK museums outside London. On 14 February 2007 a member of staff in a replica Samurai costume welcomed the millionth visitor since the extended museum opened in April 2005.

On 4 June 2006 the Museum of Liverpool Life closed permanently, to be replaced in time by the larger, more ambitious purpose-built Museum of Liverpool. To fill in while the new museum was built, and while Liverpool was European Capital of Culture in 2008, special exhibitions about the city were staged. For nearly eighteen months *The Beat Goes On* told the story of Liverpool's music from the 1950s at the World Museum, and *Magical History Tour* ran for more than two years at the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

World Museum had the busiest years of its long history in 2007 and 2008, with 719,961 visits in 2007, and 787,767 in 2008, Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture.

The museum took a long time to recover from the bomb that hit in May 1941. It was not until the opening of the extended museum in April 2005 that it recovered fully. Long as the recovery from the wartime bomb was, other museums have taken just as long. Leeds City Museum, bombed in March 1941, fully reopened in a newly converted building in September 2008. Berlin's Neues Museum, bombed in November 1943 and February 1945, finally reopened in October 2009.

Over 150 years Liverpool's museum built up massive collections and then divested itself of significant parts of them. The Walker Art Gallery took over art when it opened in 1877. The Merseyside Maritime Museum took over maritime

collections from 1980. The Liverpool story had its first separate museum in 1986 at the Museum of Labour History, and then at the Museum of Liverpool Life. It will find its permanent home at the Museum of Liverpool, planned to open in 2011.

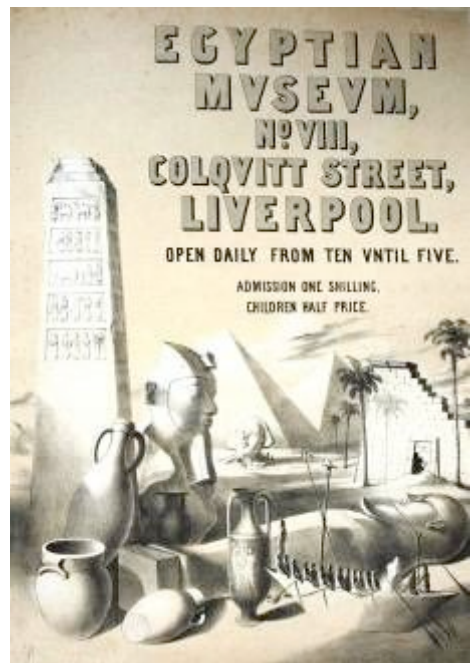
Having settled these collections in their new homes, Liverpool's museum has returned to the themes of its early years and the interests of its two greatest benefactors - the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby and Joseph Mayer. Its focus has turned away from Liverpool and onto the things that had arrived in the city from elsewhere - natural history and human cultures from around the world.

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## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



When the museum first opened in 1854 there were already two other museum's in Liverpool, both in Colquitt Street - the **Royal Institution Museum** (above), and James Mayer's **Egyptian Museum** (below right).



In 1867 Liverpool jeweller and antiquarian **Joseph Mayer** (1803-1886) closed his Egyptian Museum and gave his huge collection of art and antiquities to the museum in 1867.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



**13th Earl of Derby** (1775-1851).  
The bequest of his natural history collection at his death in 1851 led to the founding of the museum.



**14th Earl of Derby** (1799-1869).  
Prime Minister three times, he wished Liverpool town council to clear his house of his father's collection so that he could return to London.



The **original museum building** of 1852 on the corner of Slater Street and Parr Street, Liverpool.



## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



**James Allanson Picton** (1805-1889).  
A member of Liverpool council, he  
championed the museum.



**William Brown** (1784-1864)  
A banker in Liverpool for more than forty  
years, he spent £40,000 on the new museum  
and library building.



Late in the 1850s, William Brown built **Richmond House** on Chapel Street, Liverpool, to house his company Brown Shipley & Co. The architect was Liverpool alderman James Allanson Picton.



William Brown declared his origins in his coat of arms above the door. He was born in Ballymena, and a Red Hand of Ulster surmounts it. His family lived in the USA, and American and British flags flank the coat of arms.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



Two photos of William Brown at the **laying of the foundation stone** for the new museum and library building that he financed, on 15 April 1857 (courtesy of Liverpool Libraries).



The **new museum and library building** was opened by William Brown on 18 October 1860. Though the portico is now approached by a large flight of steps, originally it was on a huge terrace high above the street.



## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



Properties on **Shaw's Brow** were demolished to make way for the museum and library, and it was renamed William Brown Street (courtesy of Liverpool Libraries).



When the museum opened houses, shops and pubs still stood at **the bottom of William Brown Street**. The 1860 museum building is on the right.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



Seated on the right is the museum's first curator, **Thomas John Moore** (1824-1892). Seated on the left is Liverpool councillor and museum enthusiast **Rev. Henry Hugh Higgins** (1814-1893).



In 1884 the museum launched a **schools' loan service**, the first in any museum



**Rev. Henry Hugh Higgins** became the first president of the Museums Association when it was founded in 1890.



## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



An **extension to the museum** was opened in 1906. It had two great 'Horseshoe' galleries, and beneath it were three floors of Liverpool's Central Technical School.



Don Pedro, the elephant, arrived at the museum from Barnum and Bailey's circus in 1898 and was shown in the Upper Horseshoe gallery from 1906 till 1941.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



As the museum extension was built **St John's Gardens** were constructed on the other side of the road and **William Brown Street** was remodelled. Tramlines went down and the long flight of steps to the museum portico went in (courtesy of Liverpool Libraries).



The museum extension completed the run of civic buildings on the south side of William Brown Street.



Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



New displays in the 1920s and 1930s included **Ancient Egypt**, and **African masks**.



*Photo* *(Jan. Bacon & Son)*  
By Miss ELAINE TANKARD (M.A.),  
Keeper, Department of Archaeology  
and Ceramics.

**Elaine Tankard** worked at the museum in various jobs from 1930 until 1966. She was 'acting director' on several occasions and instigated many innovations, including a Children's Corner (above).



## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



**Douglas Allan** (left) was museum director from 1929 until 1945. **R. Kempton Perry** (right) started in the museum before the first World War and was acting director for a few years when Allan left.



**The museum's staff** in about 1932. Director Douglas Allan is seated in the middle with Elaine Tankard to his left.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



The main hall of the museum before and after a bomb hit in May 1941.



The **Horseshoe Galleries** (left) were damaged by the bomb in 1941, but were repaired and reopened in 1955. The **old museum building** needed to be rebuilt and did not reopen until 1966.



Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



After the war museum staff and collections were moved to Carnatic Hall in south Liverpool. The view of Carnatic Hall Top left is by Allan Peel Tankard, Elaine Tankard's brother.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



Temporary steps (towards the left) led to a part of the museum that reopened after the war in 1956 (courtesy of Liverpool Libraries).



While part of the museum reopened, the 1860s building stood in ruins until the 1960s. Right – museum director Tom Hume sees rebuilding begin in 1963.





In April 1963 when the Earl of Derby (centre) unveiled a plaque to commemorate the start of rebuilding the museum he toured the natural history section and saw volunteer Susanna Davey skinning a rook. Museum director Tom Hume is on the left.



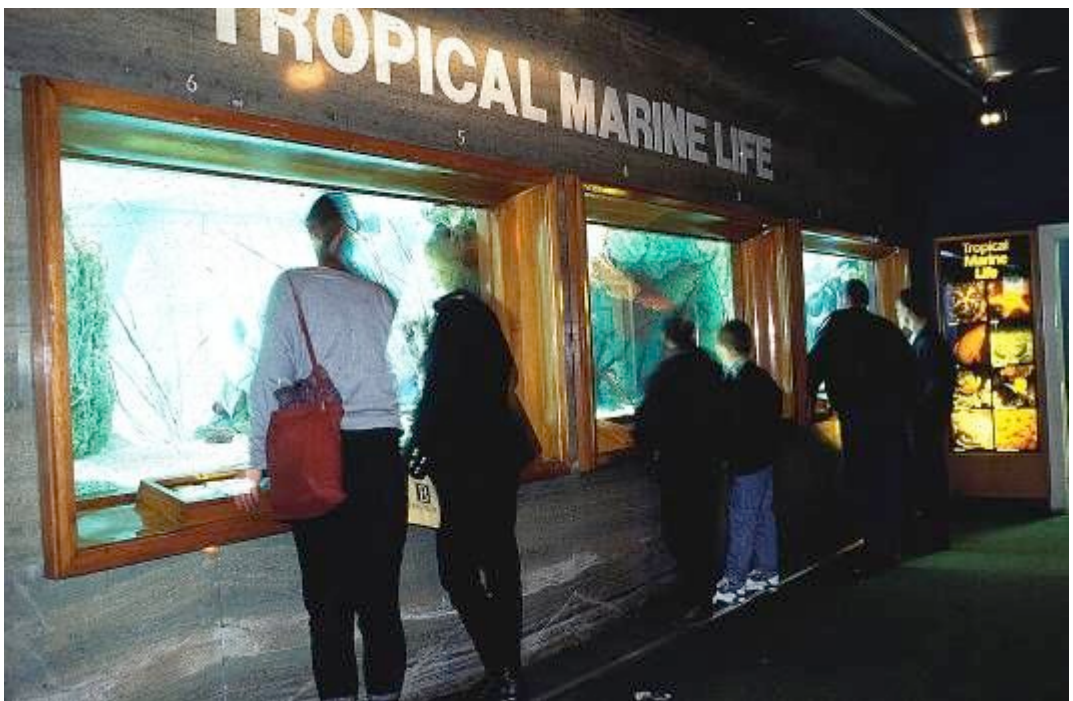
In 1963 work started on planning the rebuilding of the parts of the museum destroyed in the blitz.



A segment of the roof of the **Planetarium** is slid into place. The Planetarium opened to the public in May 1970.



In 1987 the museum's **Natural History Centre** opened - the first hands-on centre in a museum.



The Museum's **Aquarium** first opened in 1857, the second public aquarium in the world.





The **Space** gallery opened in 1993.



29 April 2005 – **Loyd Grossman**, chair of the Board of Trustees of National Museums Liverpool, opens up a new extension and a new entrance at the museum. It is renamed World Museum Liverpool.

## Liverpool's museum: the first 150 years



In 2008 Liverpool was **European Capital of Culture**, and the museum attracted 787,767 visits, more than in any other year in its long history.

In 2010 the museum has been on William Brown Street for 150 years, and celebrates the anniversary of the year that William Brown handed over the museum and library building to Liverpool.